

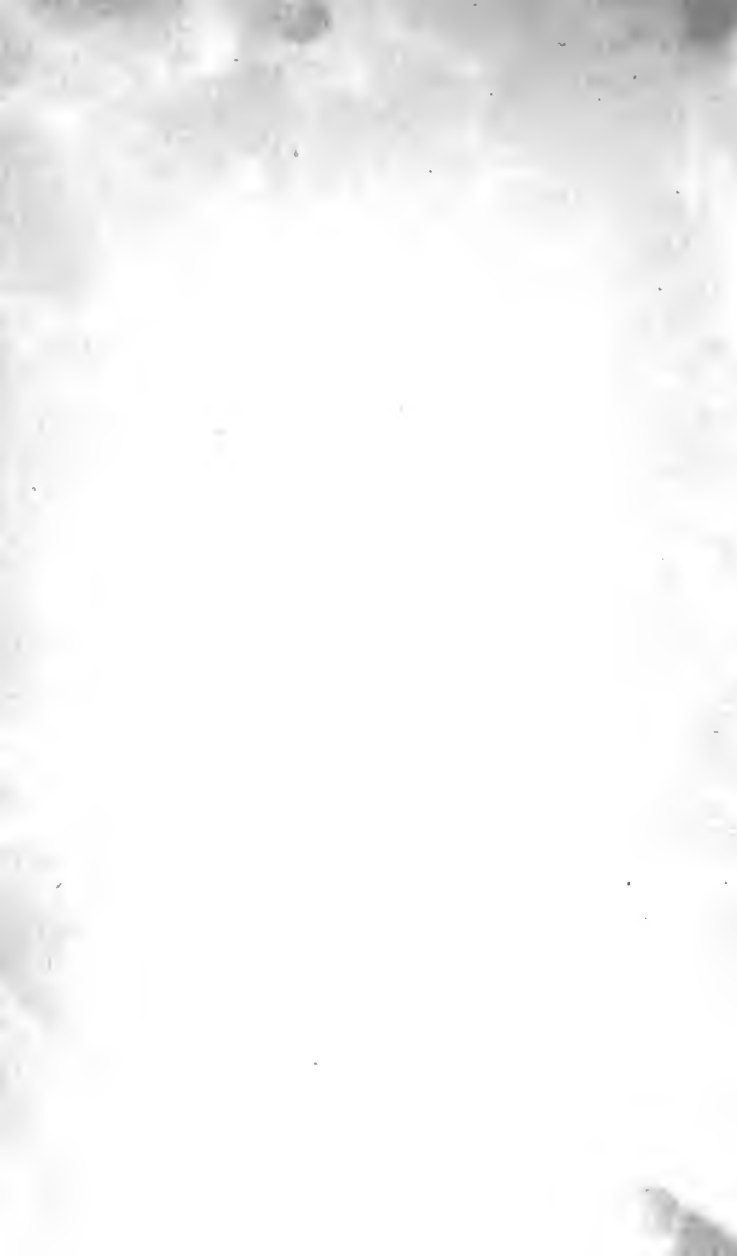
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YES AND NO.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

JEOTSON AND PALMER, PRINTERS, SAVOY STREET, STRAND.

YES AND NO:

A TALE OF THE DAY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "MATILDA."

Che sì e no nel capo mi tenzona.

DANTE.

At war 'twixt *will* and *will not*.

SHAKESPEARE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

HENRY COLBURN, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1828.



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YES AND NO.

CHAPTER I.

Gentlemen, welcome ! ladies, that have their toes
Unplagu'd with corns, will have a bout with you :
Aha, my mistresses ! which of you all
Will now deny to dance ? she that makes dainty, she,
I'll swear hath corns ; am I come near you now ?
You are welcome, gentlemen !—Come, musicians,
A hall ! a hall ! give room, and foot it, girls !

SHAKSPEARE.

THE events of the last chapter, combined with Lady Latimer's rather deliberate devoirs at her dressing-table, had so much postponed her arrival, that by the time she entered the room, the ball was at its zenith. For two hours

previously had the motley assemblage been collecting; and various as the character and rank of the company, had been their modes of arrival.

First, the ostentatious old grandee, who had insisted on the dignity of his coach-and-six, though at every turn of the narrow streets the leaders' heads had smashed a shop window, and the hind wheel had carried off the scraper from the opposite door.

Then, drawn by a pair of the farm-team, slowly rolled on the family chariot, whose single seat was as warmly contested as if it had been a parliamentary one: the proper pretensions of a bodkin being very differently considered by brother Bill, whose tight "knees" resisted sitting in too acute an angle; and by sisters Selina and Georgina, who insisted on ample space for their lower garments, and elbow-room for their gigot sleeves.

Here too, but for the convenient darkness, might have been seen, from under a carefully-gathered gown, a well-turned leg, and slim ankle, tottering over the crossing beneath the weight of cumbrous clogs; papa having been too stingy to hire a chaise to go a hundred yards, and Miss herself too impatient to wait for the twentieth turn of the single sedan which the town boasted.

How little know they, whose London mornings are spent in a fastidious discussion of the half-a-dozen "at homes," from which they are to make a selection, of the pleasure felt by the country girl in the anticipation of her only ball! With all the languor of the last night's raking still upon her, the disciple of fashion finds out, as she contemptuously tosses over the offered engagements for the evening, that Lady G. has not got Collinet; that Mrs. H lives in Bryanstone Square, and she makes it a

rule never to cross Oxford Street except to the *corps diplomatique*, who, as foreigners, have a right to live in outlandish parts ; that Lady Mary is always so civil, and means this for a squeeze ; and that if they go to Mrs. D.'s, they must ask her in return ; and their " very small, very early,"——impossible !

On the other hand, the rural nymph, to whom an engagement of this kind is an extraordinary event, wakes earlier in the morning, for fear she should not be in time, counts the hours impatiently till dressing, whilst the habitual glow of health is heightened by the flush of excitement. And what can be a more gratifying sight than such a collection of happy faces—if they did but know how to dance !

Germain had miraculously escaped from his election-dinner, only so much elevated with all he had swallowed, as made him the more likely

to go through the remaining labours of the evening with spirit, and therefore with success.

Not so Mr. Macdeed and Captain Wilcox, who were both as much cut as the occasion warranted, and walked about the early part of the evening arm-in-arm, each thinking that he was taking care of the other. The wine rendered Macdeed facetious, the captain only familiar.

“My friend the captain,” Macdeed repeated several times with an accompanying laugh; “though only a single vote after our dinner has turned out a plumper.”

“Macdeed, my man, don’t talk nonsense; and take care, or you’ll run against the ladies,” replied the captain, pulling him away.

Mr. Stedman was solemn and sober, but looked wonderfully clean, till after the dancing had set in with such severity as to cause the first

fall of powder upon his coat, which, though antique in cut, was new for the occasion; nor was his double-breasted white dimity waistcoat as yet stained with snuff; and his stout legs, shown to advantage in ribbed silk stockings, seemed to want nothing but elasticity to qualify them for the labours of the evening. Yet for all this, there was not a young lady whose situation in the county entitled her to dance with one of the members, who did not put up a secret wish that the young and handsome Germain might first offer to lead her forth, and that she might not be left to be dragged up and down by the main force of the old squire.

Germain, who was not very learned in the etiquette of these occasions, had entertained some vague sort of intention of opening the ball with Lady Latimer, but her late arrival put that out of the question, and it was lucky for his popularity that it did so. It was sug-

gested to him, that to dance with a bride would prevent jealousies about any other pretensions; and Mrs. Captain Wilcox, both on account of her father's situation in the county, and her husband's recently acquired property, would be a proper person.

Our old friend Fanny was not dressed as a bride—it would have been better if she had, for the combined election colours which she thought her husband's opinions required on the occasion, were not becoming. Hers was not a taste which could be trusted with the indiscriminate use of two such colours as blue and red, particularly as she of course had no very accurate idea of the peculiarly delicate shade of the real “*feu d'enfer*.” Her shoes, however, were red, which Germain could not deny was giving a very fair allowance in point of quantity to his colour. Still her general appearance was dowdy; and as Germain stood

opposite to her waiting to begin, though it was impossible to find much fault with any thing that looked so good and fresh, and happy and healthy, yet he could not help wondering at his former self, as he recollected some of the day dreams of his early sentiment.

There, too, stood his formerly revered, always respectable Mentor, her father, who certainly was not in the same state as the captain and Mr. Macdeed; but this arose not so much from any abstemiousness on the occasion, as from having ascertained from long habit exactly how much he could drink with decency. Germain fancied, when he first observed him, that his features had the cunning compression of a man who knows that he has drank enough, and he was confirmed in his opinion by the maudlin tone in which he said, as he passed, nodding at Fanny, "Old times, eh, Mr. Germain?"

When Captain Wilcox at that moment

touched him on the other side, and nodding and smirking, said, “ Much flattered, I’m sure, Mr. Germain; you’ll make Mrs. Wilcox quite sport high at opening the ball with the Member ——,” Germain felt almost gratified by the captain’s interruption, from the consciousness he thence derived that ‘ old times ’ could not be really revived.

Reply was prevented by the commencement of the dancing; and Fanny swam, and bounced, and floated, and jumped, as if she was determined to show her sense of the honour.

“ ’Tis pity,” thought Germain, “ that where the heart is so light, the heels should be so heavy.”

At length, to his infinite relief, though his exertions had kept no pace with those of his partner, they reached the bottom. At this moment Lady Latimer entered the room alone, and took her seat at one end of it by Mrs.

and the Misses Luton. She had depended upon having Miss Mordaunt to accompany her. Lord Latimer had declined to come from a feeling, perhaps unnecessarily squeamish in those days, that a peer had better not personally interfere in elections. Fitzalbert, in a fit of indolence, had staid with him.

The first glance satisfied Germain that Lady Latimer never looked more beautiful; and she took the same opportunity to signify her congratulations at his success by a slight inclination of the head, and a finger half raised to point out the colours she wore. But from where he stood, Germain could see her but imperfectly; for between them was the figure of Mrs. Wilcox fanning herself, and swinging about her not very transparent person. The captain, too, came up to them again, saying, "Fanny, my dear, hadn't you better be seated;

now I declare you are quite warm, and I'm sure you must be leg-weary."

"Me! oh no, I could dance down ten times more, with pleasure."

"*Dieu m'en défende!*" thought Germain.

"But are you sure it's quite prudent, my dear?" enquired the captain, winking and nudging Germain, who was not learned enough in family matters to comprehend the meaning of the innuendo, though it added to the already deep die of Fanny's skin.

As they were (to use the new idiom of the day) being danced up, he observed Lady Latimer, who was really short-sighted, and never used a glass offensively, stealing hers up to her eye, and directing it towards the expansive but unconscious front of his partner, which was turned towards her. This was evidently followed by an inquiry of Mrs. Luton, and he

did not at all like the tale-telling manner in which that lady prepared to answer it; for he had a disagreeable recollection that she had lived near his tutor's, and that she could no otherwise account for the indifference he then showed to the advances of any, and indeed all of the Misses Luton, than by supposing a domestic prepossession at Mrs. Dormer's. He felt sure, too, that she would detail every thing in the most malicious manner; and he could not deny, as he looked at Mrs. Captain Wilcox, that it wanted no assistance to make her, and consequently himself, ridiculous.

The apparently interminable dance at length concluded, he hastened to Lady Latimer, and began expressing his regrets, which were certainly very sincere, that she had not arrived in time for him to open the ball with her. "Oh," said she, laughing, "pray don't think it necessary to make speeches which we know how

far to believe. You remember the old proverb, ‘*On revient toujours* ;’ need I go on, or does your conscience fill up the rest ?”

Germain felt that he looked sufficiently foolish for him to wish to avoid Lady Latimer’s eye, he therefore carried his down the line beyond, where it encountered Mrs. Luton’s malicious grin, Miss Luton’s suppressed smile, Miss Anne Luton’s silly simper, and a certain expression which twittered about the little pursed-up mouths of the whole line of Misses Luton.

Now Germain was not aware that he had given what was considered very serious ground of offence to every one of these young ladies. The elder ones recollected the manner in which he had formerly slighted their charms, and all of them considered, that as they were the only young ladies in the room who had actually been at Paris, and who bore about them the outward and visible signs of it, that this ought to have

superseded every other claim to precedence, and left, as the only choice for Germain, which of the sisters he should open the ball with.

Germain felt what has been felt by less diffident characters when exposed alone to a whole line of ladies, that if he was not actually making a favourable impression upon one, he was probably making an unfavourable one upon all, and therefore to extricate himself from this false position, he proposed to Lady Latimer to dance the next dance with him.

“ I think I am growing too old,” said she, evidently not very seriously ; “ I am losing the elasticity of youth,” looking down at her pretty little foot, which certainly seemed to come much more under the description of the “ light fantastic ” than that of his last partner.

What gallant reply he might have thought it necessary to make is unknown, for at that moment he felt his elbow touched, and turn-

ing round he beheld the persevering Captain Wilcox.

“ Sweet woman that, the Viscountess Latimer ; would you do me the honour to present me to her in due form ? ” Germain did not know how to refuse, and therefore mentioned the request to Lady Latimer. “ What,” said she, “ the successful rival ? you generous man ! ” The introduction effected, the captain began—

“ My lord’s not here, I understand. I hope not indisposed. I am sure you look charming well, my lady, in spite of the hot room—perhaps, as assistant-surgeon Jackson used to say at Madras, the hotter the healthier, because—— ”

“ And so you insist upon my standing up this dance,” said Lady Latimer to Germain, taking his arm, and interrupting the captain, and then continuing, as she walked away—“ That was a little too bad, Mr. Germain. So I was to have

occupied the good, easy man, whilst you—Oh! for shame!”

There was much in all this that annoyed German; he was, as has been seen before, always peculiarly sensitive to ridicule, and the tone of banter so successfully assumed by Lady Latimer, he could not conceal from himself was most probably founded on indifference. However, though she was soon satisfied with the sensation her presence had created in the ball-room, and retired early, he resolutely remained much of the night, as in duty bound; and it was a very late hour ere the festivities concluded.

CHAPTER II.

Oh, Grief hath changed me since you saw me last ;
And careful hours, with Time's deformed hand,
Have written strange defeatures in my face.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE night was dark and stormy, a circumstance of which most of the revellers amid the dust and noise and glare of the ball-room were, or affected to be, unconscious. True, the proprietor of the coach-and-six had it hinted to him, and departed accordingly ; but the fair owner of the clogs danced indefatigably till dawn, without wasting a thought upon the increasing difficulties of her

return, and then ran laughing and hopping home, having deposited one of her clumsy protectors stuck deep in the first miry crossing.

But there was one to whom the tempestuous state of the weather during that tedious night added to the dreariness of her situation. Helen found her progress seriously retarded by the severity of the storm. For though Lady Latimer's servant, spurred to exertion by his mistress's express injunctions, did all in his power to facilitate their advance, yet as the road they had to travel was a cross country one, it required at each of the inns where they changed horses, no small powers of persuasion to convince the sleepy postboys, harassed and jaded as they and their horses had latterly been by the election, that any one could really wish them on such a night as this to leave their warm beds, and drive ten or fifteen miles.

At each of these unwelcome checks to her

impatience, Helen sat motionless, absorbed in her own melancholy thoughts, intently gazing upon the front window, against which the beating rain never ceased to patter, her eye following mechanically the copious streams in which it descended the glass, and equally unconscious of the tears which more silently trickled down her own cheeks.

Her mother had been all in all to her: she had never seemed to have any separate existence from that of her child. As the incidents of her early life now passed rapidly through her mind, with an accuracy and yet a variety which nothing but the concentrated feelings of such a moment could condense into so short a space, she could not recollect any one act of her parent's which was not dictated by the most anxious, and yet the most judicious regard for her welfare. And she had enjoyed a mother's affection in all its purity and all its strength, undiluted by

division—unalloyed by the slightest dross of self, and yet she had been absent from her during a serious, perhaps a tedious illness, and had thus missed the only occasion, when she might have attempted to repay, though imperfectly, those fond attentions which she had always experienced from her in all the ills of childhood. She might well have thought that the prospect of such a final separation, under such circumstances, would have been incapable of aggravation; but in anguish she now admitted that a most cruel aggravation had been but too successfully attempted, and by whom—she could hardly bear to think.

Oakley's last words still rung in her ears. She rejected them as the ravings of passion, till her mother's apparent confirmation forced itself on her recollection. "You from whom I have had no secret." And was it from him, in whom confidence seemed to have been so unworthily

placed, that she must receive the only cureless wound? Mortal separation, even heart-rending as that with which she was threatened, as the common lot of humanity, is not entirely incapable of alleviation—pious resignation may sooth its pangs, till all-healing time has slowly worked out his cure. But how would nature and reason have made their first efforts to assuage the hitherto uncontrollable bursts of grief? By fondly pointing to the spotless memory of her that was gone; and this blessed consolation had been wantonly and abruptly destroyed by him, from whom, least of all, she would have expected such wrong. As the morning advanced, and she approached her destination, these thoughts for the time faded before the more immediate fear that she might have arrived too late.

Mrs. Mordaunt's dwelling was rather prettily situated on the skirts of a little village. It was of the cottage order; and the garden and little

ground about it had all those marks of care and attention which are found when the owner's first resource is in the works of nature.

It was hence that Helen had derived her earliest recollections. It had been purchased for Mrs. Mordaunt, and had been legally settled on her, though the annuity had not, and was therefore all she possessed independent of Oakley. Helen's tottering steps, as she descended from the carriage, were supported by old Dorothy, who without administering much further comfort, relieved her anxious doubts as to her mother's being still alive.

Old Dorothy had been with her mistress as long as Helen could remember, and all her infantine grievances, such as they were, had been confined to the very short and constantly diminishing intervals when her mother's authority had been transferred to her as her deputy; for nature had not endowed Dorothy with a good

temper, and perhaps her limited experience of life had not improved it. The wayward fancies of childhood had therefore often irritated and incensed her. In later days, what had most soured her and excited her spleen, was Helen's increasing beauty. Whether this arose from her own original deficiency in this respect, or from some other cause, she used always to say : " She know'd nought but mischief comes of your fair skin and your fine form.

" The canker feeds on the fairest rose,
And the brightest eye will soonest close."

But she showed withal a most invincible, dogged fidelity to her mistress, over whom Helen had early observed that she had no slight degree of influence. She had also always remarked that Dorothy was kinder at a period of calamity or distress, and that not so much from any apparent effort to exert herself more at such

times, as that it was a state which appeared best suited to her own habitual frame of mind. It was long therefore since Helen had been so warmly greeted by her as she was upon the present melancholy occasion of her return. As she supported her with one arm, she gently turned the stray hair off her forehead with her other withered hand. Perhaps she was softened and thrown off her guard by her own distress—perhaps the havoc that grief had made in Helen's beauty caused her to view it with unusual complacency, as she said: "God bless your dear face, it does one good to see it again—how you have been crying! Oh! Miss Mordaunt, to think that you should return when there is no hope left. She has been much worn away within the last week; before that I never found it out: she never complains, you know it's not her way. I thought to myself that she seemed to grow a bit thinner; but I've seen over many and great

changes in her, poor lady, in my day, to mind a trifle; and then my eyes are not so sharp as they have been; and I minded it not so much, for that I guessed your being away might make her a bit lonesome, for she needs other company than her own thoughts; and I spoke to her more sharply than I've done this many a long year, that she should send for you here, and that she ought to ken well enough you'd get no good gadding where you were; and then she took on so, poor soul, that I was sorry for what I'd said, though I meant it all for the best. And the next day was the first she was over weak to get as far as your garden to tend your flowers. She'd ne'er missed a day since you went, and that she minded worser than any thing, and so she sent for the doctor, and together they settled to have you back."

By this time they had crossed the garden to the front door, and Helen eagerly inquired

whether she should go in at once to her mother, or whether Dorothy had best break her arrival to her.

“Why, I reckon she has just dropped into a sort of dose, for you must know she was rather on the look out for your return all yesterday, and that fretted her into a worse fever. I don’t know how it was, she had her own way of sending to tell you ; if she had but left it to me, I’d have had a care there should have been no mistake ; but so it was, she kept peering and pining for you all the afternoon, and though it was to be looked for she should not sleep all night, as I told her she might thank herself for managing matters so ill ; and so at last she’s gone off into a sort of slumber from sheer weakness.”

Helen seized the opportunity of escaping from the officious old Dorothy, who returned to take the consignment of her things from the carriage, and with a light tread she stole to the door of

her mother's apartment. All seemed perfectly still within. She gently opened the door. There had been no precautions taken to procure the sleep in which her mother's senses had been overcome. The morning sun shone full upon the bed where Helen's anxious eyes were directed.

Mrs. Mordaunt's was a frame where sorrow had preyed upon the substance without defacing the filmy covering. Her clear skin was still free from furrows, though it seemed but to rest upon the bone. Such as she then appeared in that unconscious trance, the interest she must have excited in one less partial than her daughter was beyond that of mere mortal beauty. The hectic spot upon one point of the cheek seemed to touch the long eyelashes which in sleep hung down towards it. Her silken hair, which time and grief had thinned not turned, strayed unconfined over her pale forehead. The expression

of her colourless lips was tranquil and free from pain. Her thin transparent hands, more than any thing else, told the tale of approaching dissolution. Around the bloodless fingers of one hand was twined a long lock of Helen's hair, the other was stretched towards a book of common-prayer which lie open upon the bed. Mrs. Mordaunt's devotion had never partaken of the character of fanaticism, that mistaken cordial of diseased minds. She thought it best became a sincere penitent to study and practise the plainest precepts of religion, rather than to pride herself upon the gloomy perversion of its most disputed dogmas.

As Helen bent over the still and passionless form, where amid the traces of bodily suffering so much seemed to recall the recollection of recent virtues, so little to confirm the suspicion of former guilt, she felt her throat swelling with a sudden burst of indignation, which being

utterly unable to control, she hastily left the room, and then gave vent to the bitter thought :
“ *He* has dared to defame *her*, and to me !”

After she had to a certain degree succeeded in restoring to herself the degree of composure necessary to prepare her for the interview she must soon have with her mother, she attempted to sustain herself by a survey of the well-known contents of their common sitting-room. Every thing was much as she had left it. Her sketch-book, however, which she had put by, was open, as if it had been recently examined. Her birds too had not been neglected, from the appearance of the green food and water in the cages ; it seemed as if they must have been replenished no longer ago than the evening before. This was an attention quite out of old Dorothy’s line. It must have been her mother then who had thus employed the moments while she had been, as stated, fretting for her return.

She was soon again summoned to the bed-room. After the first agitation of meeting had subsided, Mrs. Mordaunt raising herself said : “ And have you not suffered from cold, my poor child ? I could not sleep till the storm had subsided, with the thought that you might be out in it.”

“ Think not of me ; to find you thus—ill, very ill, I fear,” said Helen, unable to bear the unnatural brilliancy of her mother’s eye, which alarmed her more than any of the symptoms of decay which she had observed whilst she was still asleep.

“ His will be done !” said Mrs. Mordaunt ; “ it is perhaps on many accounts better as it is. Better for you, I mean, which is my only care. You are formed to ornament society. It would have been out of my power to accompany you into the world ; you must have observed that I have always avoided society ; I have not been without my reasons for it.”

As Mrs. Mordaunt paused, Helen felt a slight shudder, as this conduct of her mother occurred to her in a new light.

She then continued: "I shall never again perhaps be stronger than I am at present, so I may as well now communicate one or two facts with regard to your future circumstances, which it is necessary you should know. It is not much I can bring myself to say, but if I have had, and still have any concealment from you, it is only what an anxious consideration for your happiness has, upon mature deliberation, determined me to pursue."

"There is one, however," thought Helen, "from whom she has had no secret;" and she almost dreaded that in what was about to follow she should hear any allusion to that name, which it would previously have gladdened her heart to have heard mentioned with praise by her mother.

“ I will not deny that your absence has been painful to me, but I shall at least die with the consciousness that it has been far from useless to you. The sense of obligation must always be irksome, when gratitude is extracted only by the act itself, and does not flow naturally from regard for the benefactor. Judge then of the pleasure I derived from the unsuspicious encomiums you passed upon the character of Mr. Oakley, and the gratification you seemed to derive from the intercourse with so superior a person, when I tell you that it is to his bounty that we have latterly owed the means of subsistence ; indeed every thing, except the roof over our heads. I can no otherwise diminish your surprise at my acceptance of such a favour than by saying, that your relationship to a member of his family, from whom he derived his property, gave you a sort of claim in equity to his consideration. But, oh Helen ! the manner in which it was

done, so feeling and delicate, was so like the fine generous creature you described in your letters !”

Helen dropped her head upon the bed to hide her contending emotions, whilst her mother continued :—

“ Had it been otherwise, had his disposition been different, fickle, liable to change, or subject to the influence of the baser passions of our nature, the perplexities of the present moment would have been increased tenfold. I hardly know what I would not have endured rather than my child should have been subject to a sudden shock, such as—but what am I saying ? I feel that under any circumstances my strength would not have been equal to any further exertion. And I trust in heaven ’tis better as it is. There is an all-seeing eye which penetrates our most secret thoughts, and Heaven knows that it is only for my child and her sake that I

would——” The rest of the sentence hovered trembling on the mother’s lip, but reached not the daughter’s ear.

I must draw a veil over their final separation, which, heart-rending as it would have been even if there had been no necessity for reserve, was aggravated by many pangs which the mother feared to communicate.

CHAPTER III.

————— My project may deceive me,
But my intents are fix'd, and will not leave me.

SHAKSPEARE.

HELEN had been but four-and-twenty hours returned when her mother expired in her arms ; and as she slowly recovered from the immediate stupor of despair, the first sound that jarred discordantly upon her returning senses was the merry chime of the village bells summoning the rural congregation to morning-service, for it was Sunday.

The powers of sound upon the brain in awakening dormant associations, have been felt by many, independent of time or space. And even in declining life, an accidental imitation of the well-known tone of the bell that used to disturb the slumbers of the schoolboy, has recalled for a moment the remembrance of the long-forgotten hopes and fears of childhood. But the summons, which with its unwelcome jingle and ill-timed cheerfulness now grated upon Helen's ear, was one which had never hitherto been unpleasing either to her or her mother. And the last time she had heard it—it seemed but yesterday—how different had been her feelings! In the sameness of their tranquil life, the return of the Sunday had always furnished the principal event, and the consequent periodical return of Mrs. Mordaunt's walk to the parish-church had for some time

been the extent of her rambles beyond her own garden. Upon these occasions the severe simplicity, though studied neatness of Mrs. Mor-daunt's attire, had added to the impression created by her striking though no longer blooming figure. And now Helen recalled with an astonishing accuracy the whole of her appearance, dress, and deportment, the last time that they had together started to obey that summons to church. She recollected too, and it was consolatory to her in her present state, the increased cheerfulness with which her mother always returned from thence ; but it occurred to her, with some slight sensation of reproach, that she had not then been warned by the first symptom of bodily weakness shown by her mother, in requiring the assistance of her arm on their walk homewards the day before she had last left her on her visit to Lady Latimer.

Still that distractingly cheerful sound continued, and with the desperation with which one sometimes turns one's attention to that which is painful, Helen half opened the window-shutters. It was a bright autumnal morning. At the distance of the garden she could see, on one side, small parties of the peasantry, all in their gayest clothing, and hearts as gay, hastening towards their morning duty, but opposite her own little gate, there was a still, and apparently increasing group, and all, as they passed, paused a minute, as it were, listening on the skirts of this group, and then, as they resumed their way, it was easy to observe in the awkward gait of all, and in the unfolded handkerchief of many of the women, that they had just heard heavy news. For Mrs. Mor-daunt had been the best of neighbours to the poor, her charity had been, not only of the hand,

but of the heart, and there are few so ignorant as not to appreciate the distinction.

From this melancholy sight, Helen turned inwardly to the consolation that she thought she might derive from the good offices of Mr. Saunders, the respectable clergyman, whose influence on his parishioners had only been commensurate to his merit. She mentioned this to Dorothy, with the desire that she might see him after the duties of the day were concluded.

“ Aye, I thought of the same thing myself,” said Dorothy, “ how fashous it was, and how disappointed you’d be when you heard it ; why, he’s removed too—no, not dead,” seeing Helen much shocked,—“ he’s gotten a better benefice, that’s all, and I don’t believe there’s fifty pound a-year difference, neither ; and it was na like him, to leave us all for that, and go among strangers, and here I’m certain there are

those who would have made up the difference to keep him—and now we've gotten a beardless boy, that drived himself down in a dog-cart, and that I should guess, had to learn more than to teach. He's civil enough too, for when one of his sporting dogs, nasty brute, strayed into our grounds and destroyed one of your carnation-beds, and my poor mistress was sorely grieved, for she'd cared it every day for your return, and I went to give him a piece of my mind about it, instead of flying out too, he was so sorry, I couldn't say half as much as I meant to have done, and he bid me say he'd rather hang all the dogs he had, than it should happen again. But he's ow'r young for his business, that's certain, and I'm thinking that you'd not like to speak to him yourself; but if you'd leave all to me, to settle about my poor lady's last"—Here even Dorothy's tough nature yielded to her better feelings, and her grief choked her.

“ No, I’ll go through it all myself, if I can,” said Helen.

The Hon. and Rev. Henry Seaford called the next morning, to ask the intentions of the orphan girl as to the funeral of her parent, and Helen forced herself to see him. He was a raw youth just from college, but apparently with the manners of a gentleman, and the feelings of an honest man ; very much embarrassed, however, at the distressing situation into which the duties of his new profession had brought him, but probably with nothing but his youth and inexperience, (of which he would soon be cured,) to prevent his adequately fulfilling them. Such as he was, though Helen felt at once that it was impossible for her to ask or expect any advice from him, on the difficulties of her present situation, which were most seriously aggravated by the removal of her old friend, Mr. Saunders, who would, at such a moment, have been an

invaluable monitor. But, after she had in some measure, recovered from the effects of the harrowing sight of watching the earth close over the remains of her only acknowledged relation, she felt that it was then for her to decide something as to her future fate.

Whichever way she turned, the prospect seemed gloomy enough; one thing she had firmly resolved, that after Oakley's insulting and offensive allusion to the terms and nature of the provision he had made for her, she would no longer live a dependent upon his bounty; and this she determined to decide irrevocably, as she knew the weakness of her heart, whilst she found it attempting to frame excuses for his conduct, in the excitement, perhaps jealousy of the moment. "No," thought she, "if he heard the case as of an indifferent person, how base would he think her,

who, under such circumstances, after such an injury, could consent to continue receiving the offender's stipend?" And thus unconsciously she confirmed her own fears as to the weakness of her heart, by allowing her notions of his opinions to influence her conduct, even in rejecting his assistance.

What was therefore to be done? Sometimes her thoughts turned to Lady Latimer, but her proud spirit could not bear the idea of a life of useless dependence; and then, too, though from Lady Latimer she felt sure she should always receive the most considerate attentions which friendship could offer, yet, even if she had been ready to accept from her substantial assistance, when she recollected, in spite of that lady's brilliant position in the world, how little command of ready money she ever had, she doubted very much whether, without inconve-

nience, she could supply her to the extent that would be necessary to maintain her as her companion in the world.

This plan, therefore, appeared as impracticable in itself, as unpalatable to her feelings ; and as any communication to Lady Latimer would not only probably lead to a proposal of this kind, which she could not accept, but also entail confidences which she would rather avoid, she determined, for the present, to drop any correspondence with her.

She would have found in the old governess, with whom she had first met Lady Latimer, a ready confidant, and a useful assistant in any scheme she might wish to adopt, to make her talents available for her support, but unfortunately, during her absence from home, she, and Lady Latimer, had together regretted the not untimely death of that worthy person.

Having taken the resolution that the best

way to rid herself of Oakley's annuity, would be silently to omit to claim it at the bankers where it was deposited, as her feelings told her, that ostentatiously to reject it, would lead to attempts to alter her determination which might harass, but, she thought, could not convince her. She therefore, both as the necessary consequence towards avoiding any attempts of that kind, and, indeed, as the only way of procuring immediate means of subsistence, determined to let her present residence and leave it.

It was necessary to communicate this intention to old Dorothy, though she had not consulted her upon the reasons which had induced her to form it. For Dorothy's was a character which was estimable, only for the perfection of one virtue—fidelity. Hers was not a disposition to conciliate confidence, or to render her services, when not necessary, particularly acceptable. But now that Helen was about to

leave all the associations of her childhood, old Dorothy had in her eyes a peculiar value :—she was the only living thing, that could remind her of her mother, and with whom she could have the melancholy pleasure of talking of her that was gone. But besides this, her active services would be useful in disposing of the house, and wherever she afterwards went, till finally settled as governess in some family, (which was her intention,) the presence of a person of Dorothy's age and appearance, would be a necessary protection to one so young and unguarded.

“ You don't know, perhaps, Dorothy, how completely a beggar I am left. I have no money, or any means of raising any, except by letting this house.”

“ Letting this house ! and would you think to turn me, in my old days, out of the snug chimney-corner, where I have sat these eighteen

years?" answered Dorothy, her first impression partaking rather of the selfishness of age.

"It is no fault of mine, if I am forced to seek a livelihood elsewhere."

"Elsewhere! and whither would you go, Miss, now you are your own mistress?"

"To London, in the first instance," said Helen.

"To London!" screamed Dorothy, "with such a face, and in want too, and let poverty and passion fight which first should ruin you? No, never, if I can prevent it by fair means or foul!"

"My conduct will be neither dependent on place or circumstances," said Helen, rather proudly; for she thought that her ancient attendant rather presumed upon her present situation to give vent to her ill-humour.

"Would I could think it, seeing what I've seen of you and your'n. Well, may peace be

restored to those that are gone, and never lost by those that are left !” and her forbidding features were softened by an unusual fervency of expression.

Helen was struck with the apparent confirmation of some dreadful secret hanging over her own birth, and her mother’s conduct, which these words seemed to imply, and feared lest the continuation of what Dorothy was evidently preparing to address to her should furnish further proof.

But Dorothy’s thoughts had taken another turn, for she began again. “ No, I’m clear determined you shall not leave this house if I can help it. I have not been forty years in service without putting by a penny. You never was a fanciful child : your wants are not hard to tell. You just let me market as I have done, and ask no questions about it; and, on your part, you’ll just let me end my days in the old kitchen

chimney-corner, which is just the warmest I ever kenned."

Helen was much touched by this proposal, which was both essentially kinder than she could have expected from Dorothy, and in its framing more delicate than the old woman's habitual want of manners would have led her to expect; but as, of all species of dependence, it was the least inviting, she was as firm in declining it as profuse in her thanks.

The old woman paused a little, and then, as if armed with sudden resolution, said, "Then I shall just write mysel' to some of your great kin, what claims I know you have upon them."

"How do you mean?" said Helen, with a consciousness that some great disclosure was in Dorothy's contemplation, unwilling to check her, and yet afraid to hear it.

"Why should I fear to tell it? It canna hurt

her now ; she that has done her best to atone to a Heavenly Father canna fear a frail daughter's forgiveness ; and as for you, it was no fault of yours—why should you care that you came into the world with shame, so as you can but go shameless out of it ?”

She then gradually unfolded to Helen the history of Mrs. Mordaunt's frailty, such as that lady had herself confessed it to Oakley, only that Dorothy told it in her own way, and much less favourably to Lord Rockington.

“ And wasn't it enough to sicken one of vanities, to see what she might have been and what she was ? But it was na only by her that I learnt the curse of comeliness. I felt it nearer home—not myself, no—Heaven be praised there never was aught about me to catch a leering eye. But I had once a sister, a gentle, light-haired, blue-eyed girl, with a skin like a lady's. When she left our home for

London, she carried with her the sighs of many a stout heart ; but she soon forgot them and us, and never wrote more. It was some years after, when I was in my first service in London, I was sent an errand of a moon-shiny night ; at the corner of a street, a half-frantic, tipsy creature seized me with horrid loathsome oaths. I turned to free myself. It was my sister Sarah sure enough : but she had no beauty left to boast. No, she had cured herself of that ; and, ever since, I can never bring her to my mind, save as I saw her on that awful night. That would have sickened one of good looks ; but then, my poor lady, you have seen what a jewel her soul would have been if Providence would only have set it in an ugly case. When I first knew her, she sacrificed every thing to the vain love of her own sweet person ; sure she had more temptation than most folk, but it is sad to think of her as of the fallen !”

So thought poor Helen ; but though there was much in old Dorothy's relation most painfully interesting, there was nothing that did not rather tend to confirm her in her previous determination to depend upon her own exertions alone for subsistence, rather than run the risk of spreading the disgraceful tale by seeking relief at the expense of reposing confidence.

It required no small powers of persuasion to convince Dorothy that this was a desirable course to adopt. But when, by a display of firmness on her own part, she had made it obvious even to the obstinate old woman, that there was no longer any use in contesting the point ;—

“ Well then,” said Dorothy, “ I must e'en trundle off with you, for I have now no other care in this world than to keep you out of harm's way if I can.”

The house, through her means, was easily

let, furnished, to Mr. Seaford, who preferred it to his own, in which he intended to establish a curate; and the half year's anticipation of the moderate annual rent of fifty pounds was almost all with which Helen tore herself away from the scenes of her youth.

Upon the journey, and still more upon their arrival in London, she suffered many additional inconveniences, to which she found the asperities of Dorothy's disposition would constantly subject her. For though it was good feeling which had induced the old woman to determine to follow her young mistress, yet her temper was not improved by the discomforts to which this determination necessarily exposed her. She would, as it appears, have been very ready herself to furnish the means which might have enabled Helen still to live in her own house; but that proposal once rejected, she was not over scrupulous in the demands which

her selfish wants made upon the slender purse of her young mistress.

It had been Helen's intention, at first, to endeavour to procure some situation as governess in a good family, for which her accomplishments peculiarly fitted her. But now she found the difficulty of presenting herself any where without recommendation or introduction ; and how was she to procure these, without applying to some one who would disclose her actual situation ? She therefore determined, for the present, to take a quiet lodging in a respectable part of the town, and support herself by the disposal of fancy-work for some of the bazaars. And it was soon obvious to her, that she must exert herself to the utmost in this line, as, after Dorothy had indignantly rejected several lodgings as uncomfortable, with which she would herself have been very well contented, she was at last obliged to pacify that

difficult person by taking one which she herself disliked, and for which she paid a guinea a-week ; something more than what she was receiving for the house she had forced herself to quit.

CHAPTER IV.

This fellow pecks up wit, as pigeons peas;
And utters it again, when God doth please:
He is wit's pedlar, and retails his wares
At wakes, and wassels, meetings, markets, fairs;
And we that sell by gross, the Lord doth know,
Have not the grace to grace it with such show.

SHAKSPEARE.—*Love's Labour's Lost*.

He must be told on 't, and he shall; the office
Becomes a woman best; I'll take't upon me:
If I prove honey-mouth'd, let my tongue blister!

SHAKSPEARE.—*Winter's Tale*.

“SEE the conquering hero comes!” said Fitzalbert to Lady Latimer, as from the terrace where they were strolling, they observed Germain arriving at Latimer a few days after the election.

“ Very well indeed—nothing could be better, I hear from every body,” said Lord Latimer, receiving the new member ; “ quite perfect from top to toe : it was hard to tell where your exertions were most successful—haranguing on the hustings, or dancing down the dowdies of the ball-room.”

“ Nay, don’t make a merit of that,” said Fitzalbert ; “ ‘ the labour we delight in physics pain ;’ and our modern Alexander was not without his rival queens. I have not forgotten the soft Statira we met at ——— ; I hope her foot was lighter on the boards than on the beach ; for I remember it left an impression on the soft sand, that would have frightened Robinson Crusoe.”

“ Perhaps, now she’s married, she’s on another *footing* with Germain,” added a Mr. Starling, who was one of the party.

Now all this was, on many accounts, very disagreeable to Germain ; in the first place, it confirmed what he had before suspected, that no part of the ridicule of the meeting on the sands had been lost upon Fitzalbert ; but it touched him more nearly, as from thence it was evident that Lady Latimer had, upon her return from the ball, made ludicrous mention of his first partner. And if there could otherwise have been any doubt as to his having been previously talked over on this head before his arrival, the attempt at a joke on the subject by Mr. Starling would have been evidence enough that it was not new to him ; for he was one who literally laboured at easy conversation, and it is incredible the midnight toil with which he used to prepare himself to ‘hold his own’ in the probable topic of the coming day. His great

object in life had been to be always favourably received in a certain round of first-rate country-houses ; and to prevent the possibility of his being forgotten in his absence, he used to book himself for another visit, in the lady's album, before his departure. Neatness was the leading characteristic both of his person and mind, and this to such a degree, as to give a studied appearance to both. As Fitzalbert, with whom he was no favourite, used to say, " Neither the flow of his curls nor of his conversation seemed natural—both had the appearance of having been previously committed *to paper*." However this might be, neither *papillote* nor common-place book, was ever positively detected by the most prying of housemaids. He never opened his mouth but with an attempt at point at least in the tone of his voice ; and when he did not say a

good thing, he looked as if he had, which often did just as well.

Having a fair fortune, and being of a good family, he had latterly entertained serious thoughts of endeavouring to establish himself by some more permanent tenure in his favorite haunts, and a union with Lady Jane Sydenham had occurred to him as a very agreeable mode of carrying that point.

It happened that at the juncture of this his periodical visit here, Lady Latimer, missing the resource of Miss Mordaunt's society, had felt a wish to have one of her sisters with her; and whether it was from a dislike so far to forward her mother's plans as to ask Caroline to meet Sir Gregory Greenford, who was then staying there, or whether it was merely that she preferred Jane herself, it happened she accidentally so far forwarded Mr. Starling's views

as to have Jane to meet him. Lady Flam-borough had readily acceded to her daughter Louisa's request to send her youngest sister, from recollecting that Germain would probably be there after the election.

There were few people whom Germain's easy nature could bring him to dislike, but he certainly had rather an aversion to Mr. Starling. This might have arisen merely from the difference of their characters, for nothing could be more perfectly natural and unaffected than Germain; or perhaps he only felt the re-action always caused by hearing a man cried up beyond his merits. But from whatever this arose, it made him view with a distaste for which he could not account, Mr. Starling's attentions to Lady Jane. It could be of no consequence to him, and yet the indifference with which she received the studied advances of her metho-

dical admirer, gave him a very high opinion of her discrimination. "She is not so brilliant as Lady Latimer," thought he, "and yet perhaps her taste is more correct"—recollecting a little dispute he had had with her ladyship as to the merits of some namby-pamby verses of Mr. Starling's in her album, to which she might have been supposed to lend rather a favourable ear from its subject-matter, which was a high-flown compliment to herself. Even the theme, Germain declared, had not been able to inspire the writer with an easy flow, and that his verse merited the name of a *strain*, rather from its apparent effort, than its poetry. But he had by no means undivided leisure for these observations, for there was in what Fitzalbert called "a quiet way," a good deal of play in the evenings at Latimer; and Germain entered into it with an eagerness and avidity, which had only wanted

an occasion to call it forth ever since his luck at Peatburn Lodge. This, however, did not now continue the same: the game was chiefly *écarté*, at which both Fitzalbert and Lord Latimer played much better than he did; and though the stakes were not always very high, he found that night after night the difference of play told; and what Fitzalbert called a “quiet way,” meant that it was amongst so few, that he had no means of recovering from others what he had lost to him. So that very soon, the balance of what had been called, ever since the play at Peatburn Lodge, “the running account between them,” shifted very considerably to the other side. True, he sometimes won a little from Sir Gregory Greenford, but not so much as he might have done, for Fortune seemed at present to have taken the baronet under her most especial protection; so much so indeed, that Fitz-

albert said, "there must be witchcraft in it," and that the weird sisters had prophesied of him as of Banquo, "Thou shalt *get kings*, though thou be none:" for hardly a deal passed, without Sir Gregory's marking his majesty, so that Germain was the chief and constant loser. Whilst this was going on, another new and alluring enticement to expense was opened to him.

"Suppose we go and look at my young things," said Lord Latimer one morning.

"I did not know," said the Count St. Julien, a foreigner on a visit, "dat milord was de papa of any little people."

"Adopted children," answered Fitzalbert; and they wound their way through a sheltered part of the park, to the paddocks where Lord Latimer's fine stud was to be seen, and examining the foals, they stood for some time

learnedly discussing the various merits of little creatures with crooked legs, large knees, no bodies, and bushy tails. From thence they went to the yearlings, and as these galloped gaily round the paddock, Sir Gregory Greenford, who was resting his chin upon the gate, said; "Look at that chestnut, with a white hind leg; I'll bet a hundred to one against him the first time he starts."

"Ten thousand to a hundred, if you please," said Lord Latimer; "his is in a large produce-stake with many others, and we'll make it for that if you like; as I don't wish to tie you down to your offer whenever he starts."

"So be it," said Sir Gregory; "for I'm sure he'll never win a saddle."

"Got a slight strain the other day," whispered Lord Latimer to Fitzalbert, as he was booking the bet; "and still goes short and

stiff, but has the best action of the whole set, and seems as if he would beat them all. Take it again."

"Again, a thousand to ten, Sir Gregory?" enquired Fitzalbert; "No, that's enough, I think," answered the baronet; "for I should never forget the thousand, even if it was in no danger; and I doubt whether you would remember the ten pounds, even if you lost it;" and this was supposed to be the sharpest thing Sir Gregory ever said.

"Come Germain, you shall have half my bet," said Lord Latimer; "we must have you upon the turf; I'm sure you will like it."

And so thought Germain, naturally fond of horses and all that concerns them; he had always enjoyed the exhilarating bustle of a race-course as an uninterested spectator; and as

a mere means of excitement, it struck him that a fine animal was a happier medium than packs of painted paper.

“ And you must come with me next time I go to see my Derby horse,” added Lord Latimer; and an incident which occurred shortly afterwards induced him readily to accept this proposal.

For Germain, in spite of the occasional distraction of play, and the amusement sometimes afforded him by disconcerting some of Mr. Starling’s regularly laid approaches to a bon-mot, (an amusement that was not a little increased by his believing that it was equally enjoyed by Lady Jane,) yet in spite of all this, he still was, or fancied himself to be, desperately in love with Lady Latimer, an illusion, if it was one, likely to be very much assisted by the listless, lounging sort of life that he was then leading. His at-

tentions had not been generally remarked by any of the party. Lord Latimer had been so long in the habit of seeing his wife the object of admiration to every one but himself, that he very coolly, and in this instance very wisely, determined to have neither fears nor cares on the subject.

But the apparent earnestness of Germain's devotion to her had more than once been the source of uneasiness to Lady Latimer; for she had really a regard for him, as an agreeable, unaffected, good-humoured addition to her society, and had therefore not the least wish to be obliged to break with him, still less had she the least idea of participating in the warmth of his feelings.

She therefore at last took her resolution, and one morning that they had strolled out together in the park, when he had been unusually senti-

mental in his adoration, she turned to him with an expression half serious, half playful—

“ Did it ever occur to you, Mr. Germain,” said she, “ that a person might habituate himself to the soothing effects of small doses of laudanum without the slightest intention of taking it as a poison ?”

“ A very common case, I believe,” replied Germain, not knowing what was coming next.

“ And would it surprise you that such a person should make a distinction between the careful hand that distilled it drop by drop, and the heedless creature that seemed determined to pour down a deadly quantity ?”

“ What can you mean ?” said Germain.

“ I dare say you think I’m talking nonsense,” replied she, “ but it is only very good sense in a thin disguise. You are young in the ways of

the world, and must take a little good advice from one who is older. Nay, don't look so shocked at that; I'm not wrinkled yet, I know, but forgive me if I say the fault is on your side for being so very, very young. Must I explain myself further? Most people would think me over candid in saying what I have done. If admiration has been the cordial draught in the delirium of which I have sought forgetfulness of the aching void within, 'tis a voice, I own, like that of the opium-eater; and like his, habit has made it second nature; but be assured of this, I never mean to *poison* myself—you understand me—and I have said enough when I have added that you are intended for better things than to administer drop by drop my daily dose of flattery; so help me in this crossing." And as she lightly touched the hand he offered, said: "We shall always be friends, I'm

certain; and now don't look so doleful, for here comes Fitzalbert, if he suspects any thing, he will quiz *perhaps both*, but certainly *you*."

This was the strongest inducement she could have held out for discretion, and it was not without its effect; and perhaps upon the whole the interruption caused by Fitzalbert was not entirely unwelcome, for however much annoyed Germain might have been at the tone taken by Lady Latimer, there was in her manner, with much kindness, an air of superiority, a coolness, and an entire absence of all embarrassment, which convinced him that remonstrance would have been entirely in vain, and thus his only hope of continuing her friend, was never to attempt to be more.

It was in the state of things produced by this interview that he thought a little absence

would not be amiss, and therefore readily accepted Lord Latimer's proposal to accompany him to see his Derby horse.

CHAPTER V.

I am wrapp'd in dismal thinkings.

SHAKSPEARE.

AFTER the abrupt termination of Oakley's last interview with Helen, he had quitted Lady Latimer's lodgings in a state of mind bordering on distraction; and could Helen have seen his deportment during the rest of that night, it would have confirmed her first impression, created by his incoherent reproaches, that they

could be but the ravings of insanity. He mounted his horse, and rode furiously away, not knowing or caring whither he went; as it was merely from himself and his own reflections that he sought to escape. But the pangs of self-reproach are not so easily avoided, though many were the efforts he made to convince himself that he was not so much in the wrong. He attempted to consider Helen as fickle and frivolous, the child of circumstance, and the willing slave of fashion. But it was all in vain! She always recurred to him patient in suffering loveliness, and bending under a load of grief, the burden of which had been doubled by the ebullitions of his ungovernable temper, and his wanton perversion of a sacred trust.

Towards dawn his horse began to remind him that the reasons for the continuance of their

headlong course were not mutual, and he was then not displeased to find that he was quite in a different direction from Goldsborough Park, and much nearer Rockington Castle, to which he determined for the time to turn his steps, as best suited to his present gloomy frame of mind.

The outward appearance of every thing still remained the same—still the same stamp of solitary misanthropy on all around. He would not have been able, even if he had been willing, so soon to remove the desolating, characteristic traces of the late proprietor. But did he himself return the same? In one respect he had certainly maintained to the letter the resolution he had formed upon the acquisition of his property. In all the ordinary every-day relations of life, he had always shown the same cold distrust towards those who sought his favour—

the same haughty dislike to stoop to seek the favour of others.

But to this general rule in one instance the noble, and in another, the softer feelings of his nature had sought to establish two exceptions, and in both they seemed to have failed. Patriotic ambition had fired him with a desire to represent his native county in parliament. He had entered into the contest with the most disinterested intentions of benefiting the county by his active services. He had retired from it, the victim, as he thought, of the treachery of false friends, and the corruption of base competitors. Sometimes, to be sure, in spite of his desire to crush it, there would rise on his mind a suspicion that he might not have been sufficiently gracious upon his canvass, and that individual courtesy was sometimes esteemed no bad criterion of the sincerity of general good intentions.

Of the infinitely more painful impression left by a review of his conduct on the other occasion, he was unable to analyse the mixed nature. The ready relief which in the first instance he had hastened to grant to Mrs. Mordaunt, upon her appeal, was almost the only act in the disposal of his immense property upon which he could reflect with any feelings of peculiar complacency. To many of the more obvious claims upon his liberality to which his present situation had of course exposed him, he had felt averse, from a dislike of the very semblance of ostentation; to some more pressing demands for charity he had turned a deaf ear, from a constitutional fear of imposition. As to the expense incurred in a contested election, he thought his had been managed with the strictest economy; that is to say, an abuse of money to which few look without regret after success—none after failure. As to

the more transient sources of enjoyment which a large fortune opens to him who delights to forget the graver cares in promoting the convivial intercourse of the world, to these his unsocial disposition placed a bar, which he had not as yet attempted to surmount.

From the first, therefore, he had experienced no pleasure from the possession of his splendid property, equivalent to that of placing the child of his benefactor above want. Afterwards, upon becoming acquainted with her, this satisfaction was blended with sensations of a stronger nature; and the impression made upon him was more powerful in proportion, as his heart was not habituated to feelings of this description. He would then have thought no sacrifice on his part too great to insure her happiness; and so far from considering the circumstance of her birth as a degradation, he only esteemed it an

additional reason why he should endeavour to be the medium of endowing with his uncle's worldly goods the only living relie he had left behind him.

And yet in an unguarded moment of passion, all these hopes and intentions had been overthrown. Though he would not have endured that any other person should insinuate that Helen was other than perfect, yet had his distrustful nature allowed him to imbibe the most absurd suspicions, and the most ridiculous jealousy, and under their influence to forget himself so far as to make disclosures which he could never sufficiently repent.

The longer he remained at Rockington Castle, the more acutely did these reflections prey upon his harassed mind. Every thing that reminded him of his uncle, gave him an additional pang of self-reproach, ashamed, as he could not but

be, of having been the means of publishing his foibles where he would most have wished them concealed. Every time that he passed by the gallery where hung the portrait of Lord Rockington, which, from the first, had made so strong an impression upon his imagination, it recalled to his recollection the indignant expression which Helen's countenance had assumed when repelling his insinuations against her friend.

All this he forced himself for some time to suffer, till he at last became sensible that he ought no longer to delay returning to Goldsborough Park, where many matters of various descriptions required his presence. One of the most urgent, was the state of the borough from which the park took its name.

Goldsborough was a neat little market-town, situated just at the park-gate. It had no pecu-

liar claims to consequence, founded on trade, or manufactures, but it abounded in those never-failing signs of independent competency, green doors, with bright brass knockers, fenced in by white railings, containing five feet of gravel walk, and as much of border on each side crowded with hollyoaks and sunflowers.

In most of the dwellings so situated, resided the electors, who had been long accustomed to attend to the wishes of their near neighbours at the park, in the choice of their members. In the early part of Lord Rockington's life, this had not been without its advantages, as far as a quiet little inland market-town, with no particular pretensions of any kind, could desire. Latterly this interest had been kept up, as much as was in his power, by Mr. Gardner, and was one of the many instances in which

he had attended to his employer's interests beyond the strict line of his duty.

Since Oakley had come into possession, he had given many causes of offence: not the least was, that from a dislike to intrusion upon his privacy, he had shut up the park, and by that means deprived the corporation and the wives of its members of their regular Sunday stroll, where, from time immemorial, they had always carved true love upon the trees, and picked chicken bones under them. This had been a grievous offence, and had been aggravated by many other instances of neglect; so much so, that when Oakley wished, in case he should fail in the county, at least to gain a seat in parliament by returning himself for Goldsborough—unexpected grumblings occurred. These, however, were luckily checked, instead of encouraged, by one of the leading members of the corporation,

the ex-mayor, whose consequence shone conspicuous in double the usual width of white rail, and double the usual width of gravel-walk.

This gentleman was a retired member of the medical profession, and during a successful practice, had been present at most of the exits and entrances that the fluctuating population of the neighbourhood had been subject to, for twenty years. He was a very worthy man, and a very popular character in the town, and finding his leisure hang rather heavy on his hands, it had occurred to him that he might as well turn his attention from physical to political constitutions, and take to^d prescribing for the state.

The representation of his native town seemed quite within the reach of his ambition, and he thought that to enter into such a compromise

with Oakley, as to share the representation with him as his colleague, would be the best means of obtaining that object.

Oakley at this moment was rather harassed with the difficulties of the county election, and only anxious to secure his own return. Entertaining notions on the subject of reform, which were incompatible with dictation if he had had the power to enforce it, (which he had not,) and having no friend of his own to propose, he made no objection. The other eleven electors on their part, were quite satisfied with such an indication of their independence, as taking away from Oakley the nomination to one of the seats, and not a little pleased with the manner of doing it, by making a 'parliament man' of one of their own body. The medical member, however, soon afterwards found his fellow-townsmen not a little dissatisfied

with his colleague's subsequent conduct. His absence at the election had been easily accounted for, by his being occupied with the county contest ; but they did not by any means approve, subsequently to his defeat, of his not coming near them, or taking any notice of his new constituents. This having been communicated to him by his colleague, had determined him to go back to Goldsborough ; and as he had felt the inconvenience of indulging his natural disposition, he arrived among the electors with a resolution to be as civil and courteous as possible.

He had arrived late one night at the park, and as he was coming down stairs the next morning, he already found symptoms, as he thought, of his new colleague having arrived, for he saw, pacing round the space before the door, two saddle-horses, the collar-marks on

whose necks seemed to indicate that their matching so well was not accidental. On the back of one, was a saddle of the most brilliant newness, the other was mounted by a gawky lad, who had, of course, the brevet rank of groom, though his dress, consisting of a cerulean coloured frock-coat and red plush breeches, with gaiters, showed that his avocations were not limited to the stable department.

Oakley, descending to the saloon, and not meeting the servant who was in search of him to announce the visitor, there encountered, not his colleague the ex-mayor, and new member, but our old acquaintance, Captain Wilcox, who had recently established himself in the neighbourhood, and was come to pay his respects.

It will be recollected, that Mr. Gardner had

been very anxious that Oakley should purchase a freehold property then on sale, which overlooked his grounds; but he, suspicious that there was some advantage intended to be taken of him in the business, had not been able to make up his mind to give an assent.

This property had fallen into the hands of Captain Wilcox, who being desirous to change his ingots for acres, had immediately set about building upon it. As Oakley never encouraged his steward to make communications of this kind, they were no longer made to him; and as it was quite dark when he arrived the night before, he had not seen any symptoms of recent proprietorship.

He had never previously been acquainted either with his new colleague or new neighbour, and there was nothing in the appearance of the gentleman whom he found in the saloon, which

might not as well belong to a retired member of the medical, as of the military profession, or at all to indicate the sort of deaths in which he had formerly dealt. He therefore acted upon his lately-formed determination to be peculiarly civil, and welcomed his visitor with great courtesy. Encouraged by this, (for he had previously been a little abashed at the idea of Oakley's stiff manner,) the captain began.

“Allow me, sir,” said he, “to offer my compliments upon your return.”

Oakley, who imagined this to refer to his election, answered very graciously: “You must allow me to say, I consider you as the cause of my return.”

“Oh, you are a great deal too good to say so, but I hope we shall be mutually agreeable in our new situation.”

“ I can assure you, such is my intention.”

“ I hope, too, that you will acquit me of wishing to intrude myself upon what you may almost have considered as your property.”

“ Indeed, nothing can be farther from my notions, than to reckon as property, what can neither be bought nor sold ; I considered it as a sacred trust, and am perfectly satisfied as it is.”

“ Oh, you thought it trust-property, and not to be bought ; and, to be sure, you ought to be satisfied, for you had pretty pickings without buying a bit—but I was very anxious to purchase a seat.”

“ You surely don’t mean,” said Oakley, “ that you have paid for it ?”

“ Indeed, but I have, and much more since. The house, I hope, will be an object you will rather like to look to.”

“ I have always considered it the great object of my admiration and envy.”

“ Oh, let me beg at least you’ll never think of making speeches,” said the captain, rather overpowered with the apparent hyperbole of the expression.

“ Sir!” said Oakley, surprised in his turn ; and then checking himself, he added, “ I can only repeat, that my great desire has for some time past been to be in it.”

“ I’m sure I shall be most happy to see you there, and so will my Fanny,” moving to depart.

“ Who?” enquired Oakley, completely puzzled.

“ Fanny, my Fanny—Mrs. Wilcox. I dare say you can see her in the garden from this window,” drawing aside the blind, and disclosing for the first time, to Oakley’s horror,

a staring half-finished bright brick tenement upon a rising knoll, only half a mile from him.

“ Upon my word you are right, sir ; Wilcox House is a very fine object for you from hence. I thought of calling it Wilcox Abbey, for the stable has a high narrow window in it, but *House* sounds more snug and substantial. Oh yes, I declare that will be delightful for you : you can distinguish Mrs. Wilcox in her yellow gown among the roses. You’ll excuse me, sir, I’ve not let her wear a green gown since the election. You’ll excuse me,—I’m glad to see it’s all ‘ forget and forgive,’ and that we shall always be as neighbourly as if nothing had happened. We are almost within hail, and quite within call,—you understand the difference.”

With this he took his leave, smirking and

bowing, and so much pleased with the reception given him in the early part of his visit, as to be unconscious of the sudden change in Oakley's deportment at the concluding discovery he had made as the captain began his last speech, the course of which he would have doubtless interrupted immediately, had there not been something so painfully ludicrous in the situation, that he felt his tongue tied at the moment.

Long after his visitor had left the room, and even after he had, with much effort and no slight fear, restored himself to his new saddle, and departed, Oakley continued gazing with uncontrolled disgust at the obtrusive expanse of red brick before him; and it was no pleasant part of his reflections, that this he might have prevented if he had not chosen, without any adequate ground, to suspect Mr.

Gardner of intending to deceive him. Now he would gladly have given five times the sum to be able to toss it, brick by brick, into the river; but from what he had seen of the situation in life and manners of his late visitor, it was evident that this would not now be so easy, and that the captain would probably consider one of the great advantages of a long purse, the power of boasting that he was above being bought out; and that, if he once found how galling his late acquisition was, the idea of elbowing a grandee would add much to the value of the property in his eyes.

Still, as he walked from window to window, there it was, staring him full in the face; he felt it impossible to bear this, and therefore abandoning his good intentions of propitiating his constituents, which had so unfortunately been baulked when he was

prepared to put them into practice, he determined, as the season was advanced, and parliament about to meet, to start for London.

CHAPTER VI.

Oh that I knew he were but in by the week!
How I would make him fawn, and beg, and seek,
And wait the season, and observe the times,
And shape his service wholly to my behests.

SHAKSPEARE.

A SIMILAR concurrence of circumstances had brought up to the metropolis most of the other individuals, in whom it is hoped the reader is interested. Germain had not returned to Latimer, after having accompanied his lordship to see his Derby horse. He was not yet quite reconciled

to the new footing upon which he must be prepared to meet Lady Latimer; and as her treatment of him had left that feeling of vague dissatisfaction which is exactly the state when any new excitement is most welcome, he had been very much amused with all Lord Latimer had let him into, of the mysteries of the training-stable: and having been allowed to be present at a most satisfactory trial of the Derby horse, he had eagerly accepted Lord Latimer's offer to let him stand half of his bets upon him; and upon coming to town, had backed him himself to a large amount, and in his usual sanguine disposition, began to reckon what he might win upon him as part of the available funds of the season.

If he had ever thought much upon such a subject, he might sometimes have been rather uneasy as to the state of his finances. The elec-

tion, though Lord Latimer and several others had literally fulfilled their engagement of sending up all the votes they could influence, free of expense to him, had nevertheless been a heavy drain upon his resources ; and there was more truth than Lady Flamborough had been willing to believe in Major Sumner's story, that he had forestalled much of his ready money at Paris during his minority.

Among the few people already come to town upon his first arrival, he found Lady Flamborough and her daughter, Lady Jane, who had been taken up by her mother at Latimer on her way to town. This was a time of the year peculiarly favourable to Lady Flamborough's manœuvring—no bustle or distraction, and her house really a resource to those who happened accidentally to be in town. Amongst them, too, were such fine subjects as young men driven up

from hunting by the weather, when every thing is frozen but their hearts—then such fine opportunities afforded to ripen real flirtations, or give a colourable appearance to incipient ones, by nightly parties in private boxes to the play. But though Lady Flamborough did not on that account desist from her customary attempts to attract all she could, yet the object of her particular pursuit certainly was Germain. On this, however, as on former occasions, she found her daughter by no means a ready assistant. Nature had gifted Lady Jane with both delicacy and judgment, which were equally *de trop* when she was desired to forward some of her mother's schemes.

Upon her first introduction to Germain, she had been inclined to view him with a favourable eye, as a pleasant, unaffected young man; and had his attentions then been directed to-

wards her, it is probable they might not have been unwelcome : but she had seen him, as she had seen many others, dazzled by the brilliancy of her sister's beauty, and forgetting every body else in his exclusive devotion to her. Though she knew that this would end as she had seen more than one other affair of the same kind, yet it prevented her from thinking any more about him till they next met after the election at Latimer. There, the humorous manner in which he had sometimes conspired with her to thwart Mr. Starling, had established a sort of confidential understanding between them ; and though his still obvious attentions to her sister made her view him in no other light than as an agreeable acquaintance, yet it certainly was with pleasure she heard of his arrival in London—a feeling that would have been more conspicuous in her welcome to him, had she not

been afraid of the inferences her mother would immediately draw, and the schemes she would immediately found upon any reciprocal cordiality at first meeting.

A few days afterwards, when at breakfast with her daughters, Lady Flamborough said, "Pray, Jane, how long is it since you have taken a dislike to Mr. Germain?"

"What makes you ask that, mamma? I am not conscious of any such feeling."

"Then I must say you were most pointedly rude to him last night."

"Indeed! I listened to all his remarks most attentively, and answered all his questions most categorically, even when I had rather have listened to the play."

"No; what I mean is, that when he offered to call the carriage and get your shawl, you in the mean time accepted old Lord Chelsea's

arm, and when Germain returned, he found you thus occupied."

" Well but, mamma, if Mr. Germain, instead of being an easy *insouciant* acquaintance, was the most captious of lovers, he never could be jealous of old Lord Chelsea."

" All I know is, when he came jumping up the stairs, he ran against Lord Chelsea and nearly knocked him over, for the poor old lord is not very steady upon his legs ; and as soon as he saw who it was he was handing, it was evident he was very much disappointed, and indeed so confused, that you might have observed he huddled all our shawls upon you, and my fur tippet into the bargain."

" Well, but if I did discompose a young gentleman, I delighted an old one. Poor Lord Chelsea ! he is never so happy as when he is, as he thinks, protecting a young lady ; and with

all the ridicule of his tottering gallantry, he is really so good-natured, and what is no small merit in an old beau, so uniformly cheerful, that I could never bear to affront him by refusing his proffered assistance."

"All this would be very well, if it was merely a matter of indifference between the two : but I suppose you have no thoughts of marrying Lord Chelsea?"

"Not exactly," said Lady Jane, smiling.

"And I suppose you don't mean to say the same of Mr. Germain?"

"Exactly, mamma."

"And what, may I ask, is your objection to him?"

"That is not the question, my dear mamma. Even *you* don't mean me to propose to him, and he doesn't mean to propose to me."

"But I think he does. Why did he fasten

himself to the back of your chair all the night, where he could not see a bit of the play, whilst there were front places vacant? Or why is he in town at all now, instead of being at Latimer? Indeed, even Fitzalbert said, that last time he was there, he did all in his power to thwart Mr. Starling in his attempts to make up to you—and I can assure you, I sometimes think that all the attention he paid to Louisa arose from his liking to you.”

“That never occurred to me, certainly,” said Lady Jane; “but even if it is the case, he ought to furnish me with some *double* of himself, to whom alone can I be obliged to acknowledge my sense of his favourable opinion.”

“Well, I must say, I think it very ungrateful of you,” observed Lady Flamborough, provoked at the apparent impossibility of

bringing Lady Jane seriously to the point. "Caroline shows much more good sense and respect for my experience in these matters; and both of you know that there is nothing I dislike so much as your making any advances to men; therefore you might trust to my opinion. You may recollect, Jane, how much I lectured you at Boreton against encouraging Major Sumner."

Lady Jane could have replied, that there might have been other reasons for this, besides the mere impropriety of the act; but she prudently checked herself, and handed her mother her replenished tea-cup without further reply, while Lady Flamborough continued.

"There's Caroline, you see, succeeded in persuading Sir Gregory Greenford not to return to Melton till after he had accompanied us to the play last night. How did he take leave of you,

my dear?—did he mention any time for his return?”

“Oh, yes! he said he should see me on Monday if he was *alive*; for that Fencer, and five other famous hunters, were for sale that day at Tattersall’s.”

“Ay! then I suppose we shall have your brother Flamborough up too. I am afraid it will be impossible ever to make any thing of him: he is not the least improved in his taste since, as a little boy, he used to steal the napkins that were laid for dinner, to make horse-cloths for his poney, that he might ride round the field like a groom at exercise. He is now near twenty, and if he would ever show himself in good society, who knows but Miss Stedman, old Stedman’s only child and heiress, who is coming out this year, might take a fancy to him? And it would be very convenient, for

certainly your poor father was unaccountably careless, and left his property terribly embarrassed."

The young ladies had nothing to say in defence of their brother, and were perhaps not a little relieved that their mother's schemes were no longer exclusively confined to them: and the conversation dropped.

The winter passed over—the season advanced—and London rapidly filled. The playhouses were no longer 'the thing,' and even the exclusive attraction of the opera (that pet preserver of flirtations) was broken in upon by engagements of various kinds. Parliament too had met, and necessarily occupied both Germain and Oakley much. Not that they entered into their duties by any means with equal avidity. Germain executed the business of his constituents faithfully and punctually, because

he considered himself bound to do so; but it was by no means an occupation of first-rate interest to him. He was always easily led, and was unfortunately much *recherché* in a very agreeable society, the members of which always preferred a dinner to a debate, thinking that they could not live without the one, but that they might vote without the other. He therefore was in the frequent habit of *pairing* till ten o'clock—a practice founded on a compromise of conscience, which makes a man satisfied at voting on a question of which he knows nothing, provided one on the other side is equally ignorant. Upon his return, he would attempt sometimes to force his attention to a speech for a couple of hours, and wonder he did not understand the reply to an argument which he had not heard.

Nor was this all: it was not only that he

often felt distracted with the recollections of the early and convivial part of the evening, but the anticipation of the excitement with which it was to conclude, often gave a sense of tedium to the course of a sometimes dull, always unnecessarily protracted debate. When a man does not know whether, before the night is over, a shake of the dice or a shuffle of the cards may not, without any reason at all, make a difference to him which he shall feel for years, he is not in the frame of mind most favourable for digesting a train of abstruse reasoning in which he can have no immediate interest. No possible combination of numbers that the division can produce, will excite a care in one pre-occupied with the simple difference between eleven and deuce-ace. And this it was, I am sorry to own, which often made Germain's parliamentary

career less interesting to him than he had anticipated.

Not so Oakley. To him the House was all in all. That it was a ready excuse for avoiding that society which otherwise his situation in the world might have forced upon him, was an additional recommendation in his eyes. He entered into all its proceedings with an intense interest to be expected from the singleness of his feelings. He had, upon sundry occasions, taken part in its deliberations with credit to himself. The earnest sincerity with which he spoke had never failed to win attention, though some of his opinions were reckoned rather extraordinary, or what in party slang is called *crotchety*. The excitement he here experienced, absorbed for the time that discontent, with which his experience of the world had tainted him, and for the moment he thus forgot the anguish and self-

reproach caused by his own conduct upon the occasion of his most recent disappointment—a feeling which, however, never failed to accompany him upon his return home.

CHAPTER VII.

—— His addiction was to courses vain,
His companies unlettered, rude, and shallow,
His hours filled up with riots, banquets, sports ;
And never noted in him any study,
Any retirement, any sequestration
From open haunts and popularity.

SHAKSPEARE.

“ ALMACK’S is sadly gone off this year,” said a lady whose single subscription was out. “ I shan’t go there any more.”

I only believed the last part of what she said. I should have been sorry to have found the first true ; for in spite of the murmurs of turbulent spirits, who describe it as a sort of a female Holy

Alliance, conspiring to as absolute a dominion over the persons, as their male prototypes did over the minds of mankind, there is no comparison either as to the disinterestedness or benefit of the two institutions. Dr. Paley (an odd authority about Almack's) says of civil government, that obedience to it must be founded on one of three things—prejudice, reason, or self-interest. Now as to one of these, reason, perhaps, like Joseph Surface's honour, we had better 'leave it entirely out of the question:' but I shall be satisfied if I can ground obedience to this petticoat republic upon the other two, as a majority of the doctor's three elective foundations. Prejudice is rather a question for the past than the future; but that Almack's has such a proscription in its favour, is attested sufficiently in the shoals of little three-cornered

applications which, on every succeeding Monday, for seasons past, have drifted down St. James's Street—the answers to which have been anxiously expected by rank, fashion, and beauty. But that self-interest is concerned in its perpetuity, I think I shall have no difficulty in proving, as much among many who never entered its walls, as from its regular frequenters. To the latter it must certainly be preferable to be sure, at least one night in the week, of meeting in a room where there is elbow-room to dance and be seen, than to spend one half of the evening jammed fast upon some ladder-like staircase, and the rest in hunting from house to house the somebody who is hunting them elsewhere.

But what a blessing it is to the papas and elders of families whose abomination is a ball! It enables them to satisfy their daughters with

a few seven shillings' worth of gaiety, whereas otherwise they must each in turn have been turned out of their house because their wives were "at home,"—have probably been kept in town till after their hay was cut and their turnips sown, waiting for a night, and the next morning be condemned to sit grumbling over the bills in a study that still bore traces of having acted the part of supper-room the night before.

"But then," say the opponents of Almack's, "such a foolish fuss as is made about tickets, and such a ridiculous favour in granting them!" If this is so, depend upon it, it is in that more than either the cheapness or convenience of the institution that its attraction consists. Difficulty of access can make even dullness desired—and exclusion would give a fictitious value to the amusements even of the Escorial. The court is

in most countries the criterion of society ; but for many years in England the patronesses of Almack's have been the ladies commissioners for executing the office of court.

Such as it is, with all its exaggerated pretensions and demerits, it was attended upon the last night of the first set by most of the persons whom the reader of these pages would expect to find there. Lady Latimer had not previously appeared any where since her arrival in town. She had remained at Latimer quietly during the last few weeks, the interval between the breaking up of the members of the last *battue* at the close of the shooting season, and their departure for London, being the only break in upon Lord Latimer's otherwise unceasing round of boundless hospitality. This short period of repose had in this instance been unwelcomely intruded upon by his man of busi-

ness, who begged to press upon his consideration the increasing difficulty he found in supplying funds for this unlimited expense.

But Lord Latimer never either would or could understand how a man of his rent-roll could be embarrassed. “ Besides, his Whisker colt would win the Derby, and that would be ten thousand more than usual this year.” As his communications with his lady were never frequent or detailed, he had at least the good taste to take care that those he did make should not be disagreeable. He therefore hinted nothing about the disorder of his circumstances, and she remained unconscious of any difficulties of the kind.

Lady Latimer had not met Lady Boreton since they separated before the election. But as her manner towards that lady had always been rather civil than cordial, she had no difficulty,

particularly as she was on the winning side, in being just as glad to see her as usual; and if Lady Boreton on her side felt any coolness, she did not think Almack's the right place to show it.

“Is Miss Mordaunt still with you?” said Lady Boreton, wishing to start an indifferent subject.

“No,” replied Lady Latimer; “she left me some months since, on account of illness in her family, and I have since been unable to hear any thing of her, though I have written several times to the place I thought she lived at. By the by, perhaps, as it is in his neighbourhood, your friend Mr. Oakley might be able to give me some information about her. Is he here?”

“No—this is not exactly in his line. He is probably attending his duty at the House. I see

Mr. Germain is here.” And the patriotic lady was content at thus far hinting her opinion of the mistake the county had made in its choice between the two candidates.

“ It is certainly very noisy here,” said Lady Flamborough, from a seat under the orchestra, where she had established herself with her two daughters. “ Can you see, Jane, who that is Mr. Germain is talking to, there on the other side of the opposite rope ?”

“ I can only see the top of her head ; but it looks to me like Lady Singleton’s eternal coral comb.”

“ I can’t stand this noise any longer,” said Lady Flamborough ; and accordingly, when it had entirely ceased at the end of the quadrille, and the fall of the ropes left a free passage across the room, she made the best of the way across, steering by Lady Singleton’s coral

comb. Her ladyship she found stationary where she expected ; but Germain was flown. She was in despair. Again seating herself between her girls on the nearest sofa, her quick eye caught the figure of Germain strolling listlessly that way between the hind sofa and the wall.

“ You’d better sit up there behind, Jane, and leave room for Lady Boreton here. I am very anxious to speak to Lady Boreton.”

This succeeded perfectly ; for though Lady Boreton seemed to have much more to say to her than she had to Lady Boreton, yet she had still opportunity to observe, whilst apparently listening attentively, that Germain made a full stop behind that part of the back sofa where she had posted Lady Jane, and seemed, in spite of his position blocking up the passage, not the least inclined to move.

“ I have been telling Flamborough,” said Fitzalbert, coming up to Lady Flamborough, “ that he ought to have Smith to cut his hair. He has come here with a head like a stable-boy’s.”

“ Is that your son ?” said Lady Boreton. “ I never saw him before. What is his turn ? Is he literary ?”

Lady Flamborough hesitated how to answer this query, but Fitzalbert replied for her : “ Oh yes ! very. He made a book *upon the Oaks* last year.”

“ A pastoral poem, I presume,” said Lady Boreton, to whom he spoke in enigmas.

“ Not exactly : a modern eclogue,” said Fitzalbert, laughing ; and here the subject of the conversation joined them. At the same moment the music struck up, and Lady Flamborough’s eyes glistened with pleasure as she saw Lady Jane

working her way through the defile of the sofa, led by Germain. But her happiness was short-lived. They were met by young Lord Flamborough, who said: "Oh, by the by, Germain, you are a member of ——'s Club. I wish you would just go there, and help to make a ballot for me, for I am up to-night."

"But I am just going to dance with your sister. Afterwards I will go, if there is still time."

"But there won't be time; and I've just got the number if you'll go; and I'm sure Jane don't care about dancing with you—she'll find plenty of partners here."

"Flamborough, for shame," said his mother half aside: "what does it signify to you to belong to ——'s Club? I am sure you are just as well without being a member of it."

"But I am not just as well without it," said

he; "for it would be somewhere to pass my evenings, without the bore of staying at home, or the trouble of dressing."

"You had better go, if you don't much dislike it," whispered Lady Jane to Germain, "for if you don't we shall never hear the last of it at home. A wilful child, you know—and that's what he is—must have his way."

So pressed, Germain's good-nature urged him to go, accompanied by Fitzalbert, whose prophetic spirit, as to the future situation in the world of a noble minor with a large rent-roll, prevented his openly showing all the contempt he felt for young Lord Flamborough: but as he descended the stairs with Germain, he broke out—"A most unlicked cub, indeed. This comes of boys playing at men without first learning the game."

And so ended Lady Flamborough's hopes for

the evening. Neither Fitzalbert nor Germain returned. The fact was, that as the result of the ballot produced only *one white ball* out of *twelve*, it was impossible that they could both have played their young friend fair; and though from the openness and good-nature of Germain's character it was next to impossible that he should be suspected of such treachery, yet it was an awkward state of things for any of the party to have to explain, where the odds were just eleven to one against your being believed. So they determined to stay where they were, and sit down to *écarté*, an arrangement that was mutually agreeable, and peculiarly advantageous to Fitzalbert.

At last, at three o'clock, all hopes of their re-appearance having been lost by Lady Flamborough, she had her carriage called. "Home," yawned out her ladyship to the sleepy footman,

and "Home" was repeated to the no less sleepy coachman; and it was expressed through the medium of the whip to the more sleepy horses.

Lady Flamborough drew up the side-window. This is a moment of the four-and-twenty hours most dreaded by young ladies who are in the habit of suffering under maternal lectures; the only protection upon such an occasion being the actual presence of a good match, who has incautiously accepted the offer to be set down: otherwise the drive home is the opportunity most usually taken by the chaperon, (whose temper has not been improved by the tedium of the last few hours,) to comment upon awkwardnesses committed or oversights observed; to expatiate upon the encouragement of "detrimentals," or the slight of good parties; to inveigh against the sin of having said too much;

to inquire into the misfortune of having danced so little.

It was a part of the evening to which both Lady Caroline and Lady Jane, but particularly the latter, always looked forward with horror. But in this instance they felt safe. Their brother had been the great delinquent, and accordingly Lady Flamborough began : “ I must say, you behaved very ill, Flamborough, in quite spoiling the evening by sending away Mr. Germain and Fitzalbert.”

“ I am sure there were enough people left there without them. I know I wish there had been one less, and that’s myself. I don’t know why you made me come. I hardly knew a woman there, except old Lady Marsden, who used to come to my father’s; and she asked me how my little poney was, as if I was a child still.”

“ I am sure you behave very like one,” said his mother, who here broke off the conversation, not wishing to prolong the dispute at the imminent risk of losing the little influence she still possessed over him.

CHAPTER VIII.

Is all the counsel that we two have shar'd,
The sisters' vows, the hours that we have spent,
When we have chid the hasty-footed time
For parting us,—Oh! and is all forgot?

SHAKSPEARE.

WHEN the name of Miss Mordaunt was mentioned to Lady Latimer casually at Almack's by Lady Boreton, she really felt at the moment more uneasiness as to the fate of her young friend, than would have been believed by any who saw the radiant smile of conscious beauty with which she received the next passing ac-

quaintance. A London spring is not the season best calculated for the cultivation of the softer sympathies of our nature, which flourish rather in shade and solitude, and are parched up beneath the scorching sunshine of the ball-room. Yet often in the course of the evening did Lady Latimer, while watching the gay groupes, amongst which she saw none so fair, wonder what could have become of Helen Mordaunt.

Little did she think how near her in local position, but how estranged by change of circumstances, her former protégée at that moment was!

It was almost within sound of the merry music, the highest notes of which came upon her ear, mingled with the oaths of drunken coachmen, and the frequent lashing of whips, that Helen Mordaunt sat in her solitary lodging, endeavour-

ing to eke out a scanty subsistence, by protracting even to that late hour, such work as candlelight did not prevent her from executing. Her difficulties had latterly much increased. It has been mentioned that Dorothy had taken upon herself to exercise the right of placing a veto on the choice of many humbler, but cheaper, and equally convenient lodgings, with which Helen would have been well contented. But though her choice had been at last consulted, this had not prevented her from soon finding as many faults with that which had been taken, as if she had been the unwilling party, and she took a very inconvenient mode of justifying herself from the imputation of unfounded caprice, by being very soon laid up with a really severe fit of rheumatism. This is an infliction which never improves any temper; but upon Dorothy its effects were dreadful. It required Helen's almost angelic patience

to bear with her mingled ebullitions of pain and passion. The disorder not only prevented Dorothy from lending her that small assistance which, considering herself always more in the light of a duenna, than an attendant, she had ever attempted, but it made her conceive that she had a constant claim upon Helen's attention to all those alternate complaints about herself, and lectures to her young mistress, which, now that she was bodily disabled, formed her sole occupation. London was her never-failing theme of abuse.

“ It was but to be expected that I should lose my precious health ; I, a sober well-conditioned body when I came, God forgive me ! to such a sink of iniquity ! What with the draughts down the streets, and the damp, and fog, and bad air—no one could live in it but by drunkenness, and debauchery ; and that I should have

been over-persuaded by a foolish girl, that's like enough to go the way she should not!"

Much of this was often muttered to herself, or so interspersed with groans, that Helen did not feel obliged to take any notice of it, which she knew from experience of her old nurse's character, had she done, would only have made bad worse. She was often inconveniently interrupted in her own work, by piteous requests, that she would alter the position, or make some other attempt to alleviate the pain of the sufferer.

She had also other annoyances, arising from disappointments. With the sanguine expectations of youth, she had never doubted that those talents and accomplishments, which had always met with the ready encomiums of frivolous equals, when only exercised by her for her own amusement, would be eagerly purchased, when

offered for sale for her support. The repose of a constant residence in the country, and the habits of occupation thus engendered, had caused her much to excel in all sorts of fancy-work, and any little specimens, whether of drawing, or some other device, which had been casually observed at Boreton Park, had always been the theme of unqualified admiration; for at that time it would have been treason against good taste, not to admire any thing that had been touched by the fair hands of Miss Mordaunt. But when, in the full confidence of the impression thus created, she completed some articles of the same kind, with infinite care, and offered them to a shop-woman at the bazaar, who retailed toys and trinkets, she tossed them slightly over, saying, "Very pretty, I dare say; not that I'm much a judge of these things myself; but I'll tell you what, they won't do.

The ladies have taken to this sort of thing themselves, and there's an end to employment for the like of you ; for though I dare say it would be as great a charity as any, if I was to give you, my young woman, half what they get for theirs, yet I should be out of pocket by it, for nobody will buy those sort of things, unless all the world knows they're doing a charity. However, if you like to leave them here, you may, and then they'll be seen, you know ; and if I can get any thing for them, why, I'll account to you, that's all ;—and as you seem an ingenious sort of body, if you could hit upon something new, such as has never been seen, why, I'd make it worth your while to have puzzled it out a bit."

Disheartened by the reception of her first effort, yet having no resource, Helen left them as desired, and returned home with the vague

hope of being able to invent something which should have the charm of novelty, and therefore be more attractive. This, trifling as the resource may seem, occupied her more than if it had been the mere labour of the fingers in which she was engaged, and therefore prevented her from reflecting so incessantly upon the dreariness of her situation.

At length, having succeeded, as she thought, in producing several little fancy articles of different descriptions, which had some novelty in their design, she again returned with them to the same stand in the bazaar. She was more favourably received than the first time, and she observed that the things she had then left had disappeared. "A friend of hers," the woman said, "after she had been tired to death of every thing there, had, at length, consented to take them cheap, as part of the stock she must get in,

for a new shop at a distant watering-place, before the next season ;” and with this she handed over to Helen a poor pittance, which was certainly not what she ought to have got for them, but, at the same time, more than Helen, discouraged by her first accounts, had latterly expected them to produce. The woman was more liberal in her remuneration for some of those last brought, with one or two of which she was particularly pleased, and desired Helen to keep herself incessantly employed, in as many exact repetitions of the same articles as she could execute, to be furnished in as short a time as possible.

It was in this tedious mechanical labour that Helen had been without intermission engaged, even to the late hour mentioned above. Her spirits were completely exhausted, and her health began to suffer under confinement, to

which she was so little accustomed, and the atmosphere, too, of the rooms, which Dorothy regulated by her own rheumatism, was often oppressively close. Having, at length, finished her task, so as to be able to take it to the bazaar the next day, she threw up the window for air; and as the chill night wind rushed into the apartment, it brought with it the confused noise of the bustle below, and the often-repeated cry of “ Lady Latimer’s carriage,” struck upon Helen’s ear. As she listened, past times and changed circumstances rushed upon her recollection.

“ How differently,” thought she, “ have the last few hours been passed by Lady Latimer, and by one who, but some short weeks since, she would never have allowed to be considered as other than her equal in every thing—the partner in all her pleasures—concurrent in taste

—and alike even in dress!” And with this, came across her the recollection of the unlucky ball-dress of the election night, and all the mischief that had been caused by the colour of a ribbon—“and can she then so soon have forgotten me?”

She could just distinguish the carriage which she knew contained her friend, and as its rumbling sound slowly died away in the distance, —“Even so,” thought she, “has all trace of her she formerly loved, faded away from her mind!”

But a moment’s reflection served to banish this morbid idea as unjust to her friend. How could she tell that Lady Latimer was in any respect changed, or even cooled towards her? The estrangement, such as it was, had all been her own doing. “My very silence alone is an unfair reproach to her, and a treason

to our former friendship. What right had I to suppose her other than sincere, in those kindly feelings she has so often expressed? There was nothing of brilliancy in my former state which could of itself have captivated her. Why should I imagine that my present forlorn condition, so calculated to excite sympathy, should produce, on the contrary, alienation or estrangement?"

It was not so easy to act upon this conviction as to entertain it. Delay had very much aggravated the difficulties of explanation. How was it possible that she could now present herself to Lady Latimer's notice, without giving some reason why she had not, at an earlier period of her distress, made that application which seemed to arise so naturally out of their former connexion? It would now be more than ever necessary to enter into painful details re-

specting her family, and to sacrifice the memory of her who was no more, or to submit to a suspicion as to her own motives in adopting her present doubtful mode of life, which could no otherwise be accounted for than by acknowledging that *somewhere* there existed cause for concealment. For a moment the thought crossed her mind that Lady Latimer never had known, and now never could know, her of whom she would have to speak; and that therefore no injury could be inflicted by confiding to her the truth. "But shall not *I* know of whom I am speaking; and even in hinting at her frailty, how could I bear to recall the fond expression of that mild blue eye that never looked reproach upon me?"

The result of her reflections was the determination to rise as early as possible the next

morning, and to carry all her little productions to the bazaar the moment it was open. It was indeed early. The streets were still empty—the windows still closed. The doors were only just opened : and no spirits were stirring, except the Undines of the front steps, who were sporting their usual morning water-works. Many of them stopt for a time their twirling mops, whilst they followed Helen with a stare, in which admiration was blended with a certain difficulty in reconciling something in her air and appearance, with the disadvantageous moral construction, which naturally arose from their rarely seeing any one, at that early hour, at once good-looking, and looking good.

As Helen, in hurrying abruptly on, turned a corner, she almost ran against two gentlemen who were standing in earnest conversation,

and in whom, to her no small dismay, she recognized Fitzalbert and Germain. Though she had passed them, before she was aware of this, and at first she hoped unobserved by them, yet she soon became conscious she was followed, and she fancied known. She was somewhat reassured as to this last point, by hearing one say to the other, "A beautiful figure, by Jove!" in an audible whisper, just as they passed her. They then slackened their pace, and seemed determined that she should pass them again. She drew her veil closer and thicker over her face, and attempted to walk steadily by. She at first hoped and believed that they were no longer following, but soon again she heard them close behind, and talking in French to each other, evidently about her, though not so pointedly as to have been remarked by one ignorant of that language, which they no doubt

supposed her to be. She could not bear the idea of being known, which she had no doubt would be the case, if she was traced to the bazaar; she therefore turned from it, sharp round a corner, in the direction of her own home, hurried her pace by degrees even to a run, and never looked behind till she reached her own door.

When she made this sharp turn, Germain held her other pursuer back by the arm, saying: “No, this will never do; it will be too marked; besides, I am sure you are mistaken, and that we are a real annoyance to her.”

“Admirably acted, that’s all: and indeed so successfully, that even *I* feel my curiosity excited. Time was that the glimpse of a well-turned ancle, whether cased in silk or worsted, would have led me over half the stiles in the country; but one lives to learn, and experi-

ence has taught me this, that every woman who studiously conceals her face, has, depend upon it, derived from Dame Nature, very sufficient reasons for so doing. However, she is the best goer I ever saw—that I will say for her. I have a great mind to try whether she'll last."

"Stop! it's past eight o'clock, and you're not exactly in a hunting dress for such a wild-goose chase"—pointing to his Almack's costume of the evening before, in which they had played all night.

"That's very true—so good night to you, and good morning to her."

Helen meanwhile rushed up stairs to her own apartment, threw herself upon the sofa, crouching like a hunted hare; and whilst her heart beat violently against her breast, listened anxiously for the dreaded sounds of pursuit:

and though a few minutes reassured her upon this point, in vain she attempted throughout the day to regain her accustomed composure

CHAPTER IX.

Behold this ring,
Whose high respect, and rich validity,
Did lack a parallel.

SHAKSPEARE.—*All's Well that ends Well.*

You look upon that sleeve ; behold it well.—
O, all you gods!—O pretty, pretty pledge!
Nay, do not snatch it from me ;
He that takes this, must take my heart withal.

SHAKSPEARE.—*Troilus and Cressida.*

THE morning after Almack's, Lady Flambo-rough called rather early upon Lady Boreton, not from any great wish she felt to see her ladyship, but from a prospective inclination to repeat her visit in the summer to Boreton Hall.

A dowager's summer and autumn are apt to

hang a little heavy on her hands. A watering-place is rather an expensive resource; she can't bespeak plays and patronise balls for nothing; and, after all, she is often of the same opinion as the manager, or the master of the ceremonies, that "*Le jeu ne vaut pas la chandelle.*" Then, as to a trip to the Continent, a pretty precocious girl may sometimes be married before the age at which she would be "out" in England. But neither Lady Caroline nor Lady Jane were quite so green as to require to be forced forward; and to lose a London season would be, in their case, a dangerous experiment. Lady Flamborough had been very much pleased with the party she last met at Boreton; and though nothing had actually occurred in consequence, much had then been put in train. She had certainly some difficulty as to the adverse part that many of her connexions and relatives had

since taken at the election ; but she had been glad to observe, the night before, that Lady Boreton did not appear to retain any unpleasant feelings on this head. She was prepared too, this morning, to introduce a topic which might afford an opportunity of descanting on the pleasures of the visit, without recalling the troubles of the election. She therefore began :

“ Who do you think is come to town this morning? Henry Seaford, my cousin, Lord Waltham’s third son. You know, he was intended for the *diplomatie* ; but, at nineteen, he wanted to marry a *figurante* at Naples, so his father very properly determined he should go into the church. And Lord Waltham certainly has been very kind to him ever since ; and has just got him a capital living in a beautiful hunting county, and so he is come up from

the place where he has been upon probation. And whom do you think he has been telling us about? You remember that girl, who was a sort of *protégée* of Louisa's, and whom you were kind enough to invite to that delightful party we had at Boreton? My girls always say, they never were so happy. You know who I mean; Miss ——. It was a strange fancy of Louisa's. I told her, I thought it was taking a great liberty with you: however, Fitzalbert cried her up, so every body admired her. Miss Melville was it?—No, Mordaunt."

"Miss Mordaunt, to be sure," said Lady Boreton; "A very pretty pleasant girl. What of her?"

"Why, Seaford says, she's left quite a beggar. Her mother died when he first came there; and she's gone no one knows where. It's a great pity! To be sure, she had a very

neat taste in dress, and might make a very good lady's maid; only, I can't bear pretty ladies' maids; they are always looking over one's shoulders at themselves in the glass."

It so happened, that Oakley just at this time came in to make a morning visit to Lady Boreton. He was very much out of spirits, having seen that morning by his agent's accounts, that Helen's annuity had never been claimed. This had made him very uneasy; he determined himself to leave town to examine into the cause; and had therefore called on Lady Boreton previous to his departure, to arrange some county business with her, which it was impossible that he could leave unsettled. It will have been observed that, to use a vulgar phrase, there was "no love lost" between him and Lady Flamborough.

He was therefore rather disconcerted, at find-

ing her there ; and she, on her part, abruptly concluded her visit on account of his coming in ; but, as it was impossible with her well-practised eye for incipient flirtations, that his former attentions to Helen Mordaunt could have entirely escaped her observation, she said rather maliciously, just as she went out : “ Indeed, my dear Lady Boreton, any thing one could do to get her in a decent line, would be quite a charity for her, poor thing ! It is shocking to think of the temptations to which she may be exposed ; for she certainly was rather pretty. You had better talk it over with Mr. Oakley ; he is a governor of so many of those charitable institutions. The Magdalen, is it ? No ; that is not exactly what I mean : however, I ’ll leave you to settle it all with him. Good morning.”

When Lady Boreton explained to Oakley that

it was Helen Mordaunt of whom they had been speaking, he turned as pale as death; and had her ladyship not been engrossed in many projects on which she had long wished to consult him, she could not have avoided observing his emotion. It was in vain, however, that she attempted to command his attention, whilst she expounded to him several joint-stock schemes, in which she was then anxiously engaged. “ You must take a hundred shares in this, Mr. Oakley, it is the best of all. It is called the ‘ Joint Stock Staff of Life Company.’ You know there is nothing in which one is so shamefully abused as in the London bread. Well, we propose to bake in one immense oven, and the dough is to be kneaded by steam. Fitzalbert says, that if the dandies must go into the city for money, they had better give up fishmonger’s companies, and go into the *best*

bread society, where they will be very much *kneaded*. Very good that, Mr. Oakley."

But even this appeal did not force from Oakley an unconscious smile at Fitzalbert's execrable pun, much less rouse him from his abstraction ; though he rose mechanically, at Lady Boreton's desire, to examine the model of the oven. In showing it off, Lady Boreton's wrist got entangled in the machinery, and her bracelet broke and fell to the ground. Oakley stooped to pick it up, hardly knowing what he was doing, till his eye accidentally glancing upon that which he held in his hand, his attention instantly became riveted, whilst Lady Boreton went on indefatigably explaining that at which he was no longer pretending to look. The bracelet was made of hair, and irresistibly reminded him of one he had seen Helen Mordaunt, at Boreton, making of her

own hair for Lady Latimer : it had been of a peculiarly ingenious manufacture, lately invented at Paris, and had not been previously known in this country ; he remembered too being struck, at the time, with the admiration the company then bestowed on the workmanship ; and not a little disgusted at the frivolity which could single out this, of all Helen's accomplishments, the most to admire.

That which he now held in his hand, was of the same fashion, the same plaiting ; and could he have believed it, he would almost have said, the same hair.

Lady Boreton, having finished her unheeded lecture on machinery, offered to take the bracelet away. " Oh, thank you, Mr. Oakley, the clasp is broken, I perceive. Bazaar goods never last."

But Oakley was unwilling thus to part with

it, and offered himself to take it there to be repaired ; thinking that, by that means, he might perhaps obtain a clue to the discovery of Helen.

Lady Boreton looked not a little surprised at such an offer on his part, as it was a civility quite out of his usual line ; but she nevertheless accepted his services.

Oakley hastened out of the house, went direct to the bazaar, and found out the stall mentioned by Lady Boreton ; but, once there, he almost omitted his commission, and entirely forgot the explicit direction he had received as to the new setting, in the eagerness of his enquiries about the person from whom it had been procured. The shopwoman, having still some pretensions to good looks herself, gave not an over partial account of the personal appearance of her, the mere description of whom

seemed to blind her hearer to the more obvious charms before him ; but even from her account, Oakley extracted enough to convince him that it was Helen herself.

“ You will oblige me with her direction,” said he. There was a strange expression, which was meant for propriety, on the shopwoman’s countenance, as she replied, “ that indeed she knew nothing at all about her—that her goods were brought there for sale, and she paid honestly for them ; but, as to any thing further than in the way of business, she knew nothing about her, nor she didn’t desire.”

“ But I have to order another bracelet similar to this,” said Oakley, restraining himself : “ when are you likely to see her again, as there is some hurry about it ?”

“ Oh, if it’s for that, sir,” said the woman, “ I expected her here this morning ; but I’m

afraid she may have been a bit idle. Perhaps some other gentleman has been asking after her," added she, meaning to look sly; but she checked herself, on seeing nothing in Oakley's face which made it, on any account, expedient for her to do so.

"I think it is impossible that she should miss coming to-morrow morning; and she's very early when she does come."

Having, at length, extracted this piece of information, Oakley departed; and the shop-woman muttered, as he went out: "I should have guessed as much: it is always your demure-looking ones who are the worst."

CHAPTER X.

You remember
The daughter of this lord?
Admiringly; my high-repented blames,
Dear sovereign, pardon to me.
All is whole;
Not one word more of the consumed time.
Let's take the instant by the forward top,
For on our quick'st decrees
The inaudible and noiseless foot of time
Steals ere we can effect them.

SHAKSPEARE,

THE succeeding night Oakley passed in the House of Commons, and was surprised to find it impossible to fix his attention, as usual, to the course of a long and interesting debate. Returning from thence after day-break, he took his station at once where he could command from a distance the entrance to the bazaar. He

had, as might have been expected from the earliness of the hour, some time to wait : but at length he beheld a figure in black slowly, almost timidly, advancing : a single glance sufficed to convince him it was the object of his search. There was a hesitation in her step, and an embarrassment in her deportment, caused by the narrow escape of being recognised, experienced by her the day before, which seemed to call for support and assistance ; and, but that he felt unequal to command his feelings sufficiently for a meeting in the open streets, he would have rushed forward to offer her his protection. As she returned from the bazaar, he followed at a distance, and traced her to her lodging, but hesitated to enter after her.

Helen's situation was now more than ever distressing. The day before she had received, through a relation of old Dorothy's in the

city, where, to prevent discovery, all her letters were sent, a communication from Mr. Seaford, to state, that having been promoted to a better living, he was obliged to give up her house, the last quarter for which, paid in advance, was just out. This rendered it almost indispensable for her to give up her present expensive lodging; but old Dorothy's state, crippled and helpless with rheumatism, seemed to make the proposal of it for the present impossible; as even, had she been in health, she was sure it was a point that would not have been carried without a contest. Independent of the regard which long habit had made her feel for the old woman, her protection was too necessary to the respectability of her present situation to be lightly dispensed with. The shopwoman, too, not having found the novelty of her last batch of fancy^s articles so attrac-

tive as she had expected, had made a favour of taking even those she had just finished, and had confined any further orders to another bracelet similar to the broken one which she said had been ordered by the gentleman who brought the lady's to be repaired.

This bracelet, purchased by Lady Boreton at the bazaar, had been a single experiment of the kind, attempted by Helen in her endeavour to produce something new; and doubtful of success, she had sacrificed a lock of her own hair to see whether it would answer. What was now to be done? At first she thought of purchasing some hair as nearly as possible of the same colour as her own, of which to make it; little guessing that such a substitute would have made all the difference to the person by whom it was ordered. Then again, the expense of such a purchase was such as the present

state of her funds could ill afford ; and she determined to sacrifice some more of her own beautiful locks.

As she loosed her long and luxuriant hair of matchless brown, a passing feeling of pardonable vanity interposed to check her hand, but she had almost subdued it with the reflection, " Is this a time for pride of person ?"—when at the moment the door opened, and Oakley once again stood before her, unexpected and unushered.

Far different, however, was the first impression made upon him by Helen's appearance now and upon the last occasion, when that fine hair, which now flowed unconfined, about to be sacrificed to her necessities, had, dressed with consummate art, been to him offensively blended with his adversary's colours. Now the splendid robe of gala gaiety had been ex-

changed for a simple dress of the deepest mourning.

It is said, that few are seen for the first time in mourning without their beauty being apparently enhanced, and of this few Helen was not one. Confinement and suffering had somewhat blanched her cheek, but the more depressed and humiliated she appeared, the more unworthy did Oakley think himself of her; and this feeling for the time overpowered him. Helen, on her part, was for an instant kept silent by a mixture of sensations which she would have been unable to analyse, and unwilling at all to attribute to their true source. This it was that at first imparted a tremulousness to her voice as she said: "I am sure you need only be told, that this room is mine, and recollect that I am alone and unprotected, to see at once the impropriety of this intrusion."

“Forgive me one moment, and I will explain—but to see you thus degraded—in a situation so unworthy of you—”

“Degraded,” said she, “I can never feel but by some fault of my own; and however at variance my present situation may be with that in which you last beheld me, it was then, not now, that I was misplaced. For none can know better than you, that a forlorn and destitute orphan, with no kindred claims of any kind, can best by her own exertions escape reproach.”

“And it is my brutality,” exclaimed Oakley, “which has made you think so but too justly—how you must hate me!”

“No, indeed,” said she, “such an idea is unjust, alike to all your former kindness, and to my grateful sense of it. Neither of these is to be effaced by an injury inflicted in a momentary burst of passion.”

As she said this, even these kind words failed of imparting that consolation to Oakley which he derived from an object which accidentally met his eye. Strange, and trivial, and apparently unworthy of observation, at such a moment, was that from whence he, nevertheless, imbibed comfort.

A volume of Byron's works was open upon the table before him. Byron was a genius peculiarly suited to excite admiration in a person of Oakley's disposition. He well remembered, during the days of his acquaintance with Helen, that he had often repeated passages to her of that author, with whom she was then unacquainted, as Mrs. Mordaunt's secluded mode of life had confined her reading principally to the standard classics of the language, in all of which she was perfectly well read. "Even, then, in her present embarrassments,

she has remembered my recommendations, and cultivated my tastes," thought he; "this is not the conduct of indifference or dislike." So ingenious is a lover in extracting encouragement from apparently the most unlikely sources! As soon, therefore, as she had finished, he addressed her with somewhat more of confidence: "Talk not of my services; they are nothing; but let me hope ——"

"Pardon me," said Helen, interrupting him; "I have said that I did not consider my present situation degrading; but I am not insensible to its peculiar disadvantages; not the least of which is, that it lays me painfully open to groundless suspicion. My character must remain unblemished; 'tis all I have; and the continuance of this interview ——"

"I see it," said Oakley. "No, I will not

again aggravate your misfortunes ; but say, at least, that you forgive me."

"That I do, as freely as would that Christian spirit to whom the injury was done. Had she even known your recent offence, she would still have died as she did—almost her last breath murmuring a blessing on your name. Her end was that of a person whose former errors, such as they were, had, by separating her from this world, the better prepared her for the next. And that I, her daughter, who so revered and adored her, should be obliged to consider her.—But this is a subject on which I cannot bear to think, much less to speak. As far as you were to blame, most heartily do I forgive you. God bless you, Mr. Oakley!"

"I cannot leave you, even till a better opportunity of saying all I wish, unless you will allow

me again to restore what I consider as your legal provision."

"Do not ask this. I cannot quite forget as well as forgive, if I have that constantly to remind me; and I would fain learn to think of you with unmixed gratitude for all your kindness to the orphan girl. Any other proof of my forgiveness ——"

"There is one proof which I would, yet dare not ask. Oh, Helen! might I but hope that you would allow me, by devoting my life to your happiness, to insure my own—that you would, as mine, consent to share with me that situation in the world which should be yours by right! I hardly know what I am saying; but this I know, that I cannot live without you. Helen, for God's sake, look up—speak to me."

When Oakley's meaning first broke on Helen's

mind, the flash of excitement, even before the words were uttered, dispelled all traces of languor and suffering from her previously pale cheek. Her eye, for an instant, glistened with a peculiar brightness till dimmed with tears; when, hiding her face in her hands, and dropping it on the table, she sobbed hysterically. The sudden revulsion had been too much for her shattered spirits. While Oakley hung anxiously over her, she had time to recover from this involuntary weakness, which she soon did so far as to say: "No, no, no: I feel that this cannot, must not be."

"Why? wherefore?" exclaimed Oakley, passionately: "who can dare to object, if you allow me to hope?"

"No," said Helen; "it is a connexion every way unworthy of you; and I cannot allow that your generous nature, excited by the idea of

injury inflicted, and softened by pity, should give to a passing predilection, an influence upon your fate which, in cooler moments, your judgment would regret."

"Believe me, Helen, you now wrong me for the first time."

"Let me entreat you to hear me," said she; "I have hardly powers for my task, even if I may attempt it without interruption. If I have you to contend against as well as myself, it will be impossible. I will not deny that in the day-dreams of my solitude, the thought of this has often occurred; but I have convinced myself of its impossibility."

Oakley was again about to protest against such a conclusion; but the imploring look with which she met his attempt silenced him, and he listened with breathless attention, whilst she continued:—

“That your character has been no uninteresting one to me, I fear my recent weakness has but too plainly shown; but the more I have thought, (and I have had leisure for reflection,) the more convinced I have become, that your’s is a disposition which would be rendered peculiarly unhappy by an unequal match.”

“But how unequal, except that I am every way unworthy of you?”

“Nay, is not my present situation open to misconstruction and reproach? You, yourself, called it degradation; and though my own feelings would not so acknowledge it, yet I cannot deny that it will be so considered in the eyes of the world.”

“But there is not a man living that feels more contempt than I do for the opinion of that knot of knaves and fools which calls itself the world.”

“ That it would not force you to bow before its worthless idol, I can well believe ; but prone as your nature is to distrust, even of yourself, how can you answer that you could be proof against the galling, though groundless taunts of the malicious ? ”

“ But how can this affect you ? ”

“ Simply thus ; for I will not remind you that you cannot always command yourself. Your regret for what once passed, is too sincere for that to be necessary ; but, for your happiness, it behoved you to have chosen one already known and acknowledged by the world ; and, must I add, one of unblemished birth ? ”

Her voice faltered a little as she said this : but she continued : “ My present line of life is one that I have adopted from the purest motives, and as the only way to extricate myself

from difficulties; but my reasons were of a nature which evaded explanation. How, then, could you bear the thousand misinterpretations to which, should it be known, it may expose me? Nay, are you even sure that you could always steel your *own mind* against suspicion?"

As Helen uttered these words, Oakley's brow became suddenly clouded, whilst hideous visions, like the confused creations of the nightmare, crowded past him. But with an effort he succeeded in banishing them; and answered emphatically: "Suspect you, Helen? No, by Heaven, impossible!"

Having once allowed her to finish all her objections, he became more earnest in his entreaties and protestations. It was not to be expected that she should long resist herself as well as him. She had thought it her duty to

state why she feared for his happiness. Having done this, I hope that the reader will not like her the less for having been too much of a woman, and too little of a heroine to attempt more. Indeed, she could not help flattering herself, from the proof of unbounded confidence he had just given, that her influence over him would be such as to overcome his constitutional failing. Upon one point, however, she was resolute: that, till the expiration of her mourning, they should meet no more. Nothing should be declared, nor ought it to be considered by him in the light of an engagement.

“The home of my childhood being at present vacant, I will return there; and shall now have no scruple in again accepting that which we used to receive from my —— from the person whose property you have inherited.”

As she said this, a noise as of one moving

with difficulty, accompanied with much groaning and coughing, was heard in the next room. This was caused by Dorothy's efforts to raise herself in consequence of hearing a man's voice. At length, in answer to her repeated calls upon her name, Helen opened the door, whereupon the old woman, seeing Oakley and Helen, screamed out—"A man in Miss Mordaunt's room! I ought to have known it would come to this, though I could never have believed it of her."

"This gentleman," said Helen calmly, "is Mr. Oakley, Lord Rockington's heir."

"So much the worse; he comes of a bad sort, and I doubt for a bad end."

"You need not have feared suspicion," said Oakley to Helen, smiling; "such a duenna would have been a sufficient antidote to the doubts even of a Spaniard: but I think her

faithful apprehensions merit confidence; and that she at least should be an exception to the silence on the subject of our engagement which you prescribe."

To this Helen consented, and Dorothy was quite satisfied upon hearing that at the expiration of the mourning, she was to resign her anxious care of her young mistress into the hands of a husband, in the person of Mr. Oakley.

As soon as Helen was deprived of the delight of Oakley's presence, was relieved from the torrent of Dorothy's questions, and had reason to reflect on the change in her future fate, which the last two hours had produced, she indulged fondly in unmingled anticipations of happiness. The doubts of Oakley's disposition, which had been formed in the sadness of solitude, and which she thought it her

duty to state, had lost their influence when she had ceased to urge them; and she now rather reproached herself with coldness and ingratitude in having so distrustfully received the passionate declaration of the most disinterested attachment.

CHAPTER XI.

————— This thou tell'st me;
But saying thus, instead of oil and balm,
Thou lay'st in every gash that love hath given me,
The knife that made it.

SHAKSPEARE.

“DON'T you think Lady Jane Sydenham a most delightful girl?” said Germain to Fitzalbert, as they were breakfasting together at the house of the former.

“You do—which is more to the purpose,” answered Fitzalbert. “Did I not always say it would be so? I shall set up for a prophet; for

did I not also foresee that you would first fancy Lady Latimer?—but that wouldn't do. No, no; she had too much to lose, and like many of our fair countrywomen, however fond of flirting, she was not likely to run any such risk *pour vos beaux yeux*."

"I think," said Germain, recollecting what had been said at Boreton, "Lady Latimer rather wants heart."

"Well, nobody can accuse you of that except when it's in *hand*, as they say of a newspaper. However, I'm very glad that it's likely to be so. You and the Latimers will make a snug coterie together. It will be the very thing for me. I only hope that ass Greenford won't marry Lady Caroline—that would be too great luck for Lady Flamborough; besides, Sir Gregory is not exactly the sort of fellow one would present with the fee-simple of one's society.

I let him out my acquaintance on short leases—and he sometimes pays heavy fines for renewal,” he added, half to himself, as he walked towards the window, doubting whether it was prudent to acknowledge so much.

Any further confidences of this kind, even if he had been imprudent enough to hint them, were prevented by the entrance of Oakley. Since his reconciliation with Helen, he had begun to think that he had never been sufficiently indulgent to the natural defects in the character of his early friend, who, on his part, had always been very patient under the much more annoying faults to which Oakley himself was subject. He had met Germain, accidentally, the day before, and the first advances he had then made to a reconciliation, had been at once received with that cordiality which Germain's good-natured and placable disposition would

have led one to expect. Oakley had felt much happier since this interview had taken place; and his present visit was intended, not only as a further peace-offering, but as an advance towards renewed intimacy.

This amiable temper of mind was a little ruffled by finding Fitzalbert there. It is impossible to conceive any two men who had a more thorough dislike of each other. Fitzalbert, to be sure on his side, was a pococurante in every thing, and scarcely troubled his head about Oakley, when he was not, as he called it, oppressed with his presence; but it was observed that when that was the case, his jokes flowed less naturally, and there was more sharpness, and less ease in his conversation. Oakley had a thorough contempt for the character of Fitzalbert, joined to a certain dread of his satire, which did not the less exist, because he

would never have acknowledged it, even to himself.

Fitzalbert prepared to evacuate upon this irruption of his enemy. "Then you are not for tennis this morning, eh, Germain?" said he. A strange idea, at the instant, occurred to him, and he afterwards said that he could not account by what chain of thought it first struck his fancy. "By the by," he added, "do you remember that devilish fine girl we gave chase to yesterday morning—I always thought I had seen her before. Who do you think I really believe it was? You remember Helen Mordaunt, who used to live with Lady Latimer. It was stupid of me not to know her at once. There is no mistaking that air and figure when once seen. The light springy walk too! Nobody knew what had become of her. I always heard she was of a low family. Who knows but she may be very come-at-able?"

This was said carelessly, and with no other object than to annoy Oakley ; and with the view of watching its effect, he advanced towards the mirror over the chimney-piece, and whilst still speaking, and apparently examining Germain's dinner-engagements, which stuck round the frame, he stole a glance in the glass. But the impending storm which he saw on Oakley's brow, was so much more formidable and threatening than he had expected, that his retreat was like that of a man who has no objection to admire a tempest from a distance, but is not prepared unnecessarily to expose himself to its violence. He therefore wished Germain an abrupt good morning ; at the same time, however, whistling "*Di tanti palpiti*," with the most successful precision.

He had descended the stairs, and finished the tune, before Oakley had recovered from

his astonishment, or had decided in what way he could most successfully annihilate him. He then seized Germain's hand with appalling earnestness, saying, "Tell me, for God's sake, what is this frightful story that puppy has been alluding to? Helen Mordaunt, and Fitzalbert,—what can they possibly have in common? Did he follow her?—did they speak?"

Germain, not having been informed of Oakley's engagement to Helen, was, on his side surprised at his vehemence, but readily explained that on the previous morning he had been dragged on by Fitzalbert, in pursuit of a woman, whose figure had struck him, but it had never for an instant occurred to him, that it could be Miss Mordaunt, and his ignorance, as to whether it was or was not, was a sufficient answer to the other question,

whether there had been any communication between them.

“ True! true!” said Oakley; “ what a fool I am to mind the idle insinuations of a coxcomb like that! Still he certainly used to be very attentive to her at Boreton.”

“ You have not told me,” said Germain, “ whether you have any particular reason for wishing to find her out, but if you have, now that Fitzalbert has mentioned the likeness, I have no doubt that it was she we saw yesterday morning, and her anxiety to avoid us, confirms me in the idea.”

“ Yes, I believe, so far the conceited fool was right; but I may as well confide to you at once my precious secret; for, to say the truth, I shall never be quite happy till Helen is again safe under your friend, Lady Latimer’s protection; and you must arrange this.”

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This proposal, on the part of Oakley, to reunite Helen with Lady Latimer, was principally intended to show the extent of his repentance for his offence on the memorable night of the quarrel, which had originated in his wanton attack on that lady's character; but though he was hardly aware of it himself, this good intention was not a little accelerated in action, by an anxious uneasiness at what Helen might be exposed to, in her present unprotected situation. He communicated, without alluding to their quarrel, his discovery of Helen, her distress since the death of her mother, and their present engagement. Whilst Germain rejoiced in the happiness of his friend, he began seriously to turn over in his mind the intention of being equally happy with Lady Jane.

“ And now,” said Oakley, “ one word upon the credit of our old friendship. Public re-

port spreads too widely to be entirely without foundation, that you are dreadfully embarrassed. I once told you, that whatever ready-money I could command, and that is not a little, should be at your service; and you have not so entirely forgotten me, as to think that I ever made an offer which I did not mean should be accepted."

"A thousand thanks!" replied Germain, not a little touched at this revival of former kindness, "but at present, I am in no want; for next week, when Lord Latimer's colt wins the Derby, I shall sack twenty thousand."

"Or lose——?" inquired Oakley, shaking his head.

"Oh! nothing to signify; and besides, he can't lose. I know all about him."

"Well, we shall see; or rather, you will

see and I shall *hear*—for nothing should tempt me there.”

When Oakley, having left Germain, returned homewards, he in vain attempted to banish from his recollection the offensive tone in which Fitzalbert had mentioned Helen. He tried to persuade himself that, even if it was done purposely to annoy him, circumstanced as he was, it was impossible openly to resent it, and therefore to allow him to succeed in his object, was giving an unnecessary triumph to his enemy.

Yet, in spite of these suggestions of his better reason, he could not get over the disagreeable impression it had left behind—he could not endure that Fitzalbert should ever have presumed to look at Helen for a moment even in passing, with that feeling, which he had dared to avow had induced him

to follow her in the open streets. The intolerably confident expression of countenance with which he had pronounced her *come-at-able*, was ever obtruding itself on his recollection, and rankling at his heart. Was it to be borne, that he should always be subject, without redress, to similar insults? If the last were repeated in its recent shape, he felt resolved, that not even his desire to put off the declaration of his engagement till Helen was creditably settled, should prevent his inflicting summary punishment on the spot.

But this was not all he had to fear, when even the announcement of his intended marriage should secure him from the repetition of such conversation in his hearing. He dreaded lest Fitzalbert, having once ascertained that he was right, in supposing that it was Helen whom he had seen in such a doubtful situa-

tion, should take a thousand circuitous ways of hinting disadvantageous constructions upon her conduct, the effect of which might meet his eye, without reaching his ear; and that, being unable to trace this home to him on whom his suspicions rested, or to make Fitzalbert answerable for the contemptuous curl upon another man's lip, he should be left entirely without redress. There was much of morbid feeling in all this; but it was in Oakley's nature for such things to give him uneasiness; and after torturing himself in vain, the only practical, though not rational conclusion at which he arrived, was to take the first opportunity of fastening a quarrel upon Fitzalbert.

Meanwhile, Germain gave himself up without alloy to agreeable anticipations. That Lord Latimer's horse should win the Derby, he looked upon to be as certain as that Lady Jane would

accept him. There had certainly not been much romance in the attachment of the two; but there was much that was just as likely to tend to their mutual happiness. There was a buoyancy in Germain's spirits, which it seemed to be impossible for circumstances to depress. There was a sunshine in his mind, which imparted a glowing light to all that it touched, which was peculiarly attractive to a girl of Lady Jane's cheerful, but not thoughtless turn. Her natural good sense certainly led her to perceive that Germain's facility of temper caused him to be much too easily led, but at the same time she saw that he was most in the power of those with whom he lived the most, and this conviction was rather consolatory as to the advantages a wife might derive from that circumstance.

Certain it is, that though Lady Flamborough

still manœuvred as if there were difficulties to be overcome, yet she experienced as little real unwillingness, as she showed open opposition to the arrangement—that while she, Caroline, and two others, went inside the carriage, Jane and Germain should share the barouche-box down to Epsom.

CHAPTER XII.

Look, what a horse should have he did not lack,
Save a proud rider on so proud a back.

What recketh he his rider's angry stir?
What cares he now for curb, or pricking spur?

SHAKSPEARE.

“WE could not make a House: it is the day of the Derby,” said a treasury-hack to Oakley, as he met him in Parliament-street. And that is not the only house by many thousands that is on that day deserted. Private, as well as public concerns give way to the all-engrossing excitement of the moment; though there

are many who do not know, and still more who do not care what "the Derby" means, whether it is a wild beast, a giant, a house, or a horse. There never was any expedition on which every one of the hundred thousand goes so entirely, because the other 99999 do so. To be sure, whatever other advantages they may derive from it, all have that of receiving in full the "price of a king's ransom, a peck of March dust," which, our climate being apt to be in arrear, is usually paid at two months after date, and is just due about this time, with its usual accompaniments of a hot sun and a cold wind.

Upon this occasion, however, the weather was more than usually propitious, and as for Lady Flamborough—no bustle bewildered, no dust blinded, no sun dazzled her watchful eyes, as she marked the proceedings on the barouche

box. She thought she could not be deceived, for there was a more than usual animation in Germain's profile ; and there was a peculiar tinge on the little she could catch of Jane's delicate cheek, as it was turned away from him.

She was right ; the proposal had been made, and accepted. It may be objected to Germain's discretion, that he chose rather a public opportunity for his declaration ; but his is no singular case. Secluded woodbine bowers are not to be found from March to August ; and less favourable moments have sometimes sufficed ; and though it was by no means a sentimental journey on which they were bound, yet in their present position, they might at least be said to be elevated above the rest of the world.

Arrived at the course, the business of the morning obliged Germain, even after what had just passed between him and Lady Jane, to

leave her, to attend to his own immediate interests. Upon entering the paddock where the horses were parading, it was easy for him to distinguish Lord Latimer's, from the crowd which surrounded him, and moved across to meet him again, as he walked round. He was indeed a noble animal; but from the enthusiastic encomiums passed upon him, one would have imagined that his like had never been foaled. "Capital legs!" cried one; "how well he steps!"—and another, "What thighs and houghs?"—"Depth in the girth!"—"Never saw such a shoulder!"—"And such a pretty blood-like head too!" All these agreeably greeted Germain's ear, as he mingled with the crowd.

"And what's that washy looking animal with a white tail?" asked Lord Latimer.

"Mr. Snooks's chestnut colt, by Woeful."

“What will any body take about Snooks?” said Germain.

“I’ll take forty to one,” said Snooks himself, who was watching his horse.

“I’ll bet you twenty thousand to five hundred,” said Germain. “I can’t hear of Snooks’s winning the Derby:” he added, aside to Lord Latimer.

The bell now rung for saddling, and Germain prepared to return to Lady Jane; but in the anxious confusion of the moment, and amid the labyrinth of carriages which had collected since he left her, this was no easy task. As he was endeavouring to guess his way through, he was suddenly brought to by a whole carriage-full of the Misses Luton. “Oh, Mr. Germain, do just stop and tell us all about it; we were never here before. Does Lord Latimer ride himself?—and who do you think will win?”—“I hope pink will; it will be so

pretty to see it before the rest.”—“ I wish you would make us a lottery ; but you mus’n’t win it yourself.”

Whilst Germain, suffering under this untimely infliction, was good-humouredly complying, Lord Latimer came galloping up, his face as white as a sheet, and seizing hold of Germain’s arm, so as to make him drop all the Misses Luton’s lottery-tickets, whispered in his ear, “ He canters quite short ; he is dead lame!”

Germain, muttering an unintelligible apology to the young ladies, spurred his horse after him, and was soon in the centre of the betting ring, endeavouring to hedge some of his money ; but it was too late. If there had previously been any doubt, the anxious face with which he offered to bet against the horse, would have prevented any odds being taken about him, and

from first favourite, he was soon at a hundred to one.

Germain was obliged to submit to his fate, and patiently await the result. He attempted to console himself with thinking that the horse upon inspection did not seem so lame, and hoping that he might not run much the worse. He waited near the top of the hill to see them pass. Lord Latimer's was well in front; and the jockey seemed comfortable about him. As Germain scampered across in a fearful crowd of stumbling horses and tumbling riders, he could not keep his eye constantly fixed upon the race, but at the last corner, Lord Latimer's yellow jacket was decidedly leading, and the space between him and the others appeared increasing. Still, as he looked again, that gap between him and the rest was occupied by a single horse, rode in pink. He could

not recollect whose colour that was. At this time a man without hat or wig, and holding tight by the mane, crossed Germain's path, just grazed against him in passing, and dropped off his horse. This interrupted his view for an instant; when he looked again, the pink jacket had decidedly gained upon the yellow.

He had now reached the brow of the middle hill, and pulling up his horse, could see more distinctly: they were neck and neck. The struggle was tremendous, from the distance to the winning post. He fancied he could sometimes see a line of pink behind the yellow jacket which was nearest to him; sometimes he feared that a pink stripe appeared in front. Undistinguishably linked together, they both vanished behind the crowd, and he was left in uncertainty.

He hastened down the hill, to learn the

result : and his ready ear caught the name of Lord Latimer rising above the other murmurs of the multitude. He passed close to Lady Jane ; she actually trembled with anxiety, but her countenance lighted up brilliantly, as a gentleman passing at the time said, “ Lord Latimer, I should think.”

Germain got nearer : “ Lord Latimer, I believe,” cried a second.

He advanced, and met Fitzalbert returning. He just gasped out, “ Who ’s won ?”

“ Snooks, by a head.”

“ Who told you so ?”

“ The judge.”

And all doubt was at an end !

Fitzalbert having cantered on, Germain was again left to his own thoughts. He was at first quite bewildered at the extent of the unlooked-for disappointment. With his usual

sanguine turn, he had always looked upon Lord Latimer's winning the Derby as next to a certainty; and had actually calculated upon the money he was thus to win, as part of his available resources. For some time, therefore, he did not call to mind the extent of his misfortune; but of this he was soon to be reminded in no agreeable manner. He slowly turned his horse towards the hill, and with a parched mouth, aching head, burning cheek, and shivering back, prepared to look as if he did not care at all about it.

When he had just magnanimously made up his mind to the effort, his resolution was called into play, by hearing "Mr. Germain! Mr. Germain!" repeated by a voice which, such was the present confusion in his head, he did not at first recollect, till looking up, he beheld Mrs.

Wilcox and some others in a gorgeous carriage, which had been built upon her marriage.

Though the lady was actively engaged in tearing asunder the leg of a cold turkey, she found leisure to address Germain: "What a delightful jaunt it is! You were quite right, Mr. Germain, when you used to tell me of the pleasure of a trip to Epsom; but you don't know you must wish me joy about the race. Mr. Snooks is my Wilcox's first cousin, and he has let me win twenty pounds with him. Would you believe it, Mr. Germain, some foolish person betted him twenty thousand to—I don't know how little—just before the race?"

This painfully recalled to Germain's recollection who that foolish person had been, and added not a little to his difficulties; but Fanny heeded not the effect of what she said.

"Only think—we were just as near losing

poor Mr. Snooks as he was near losing the race. Some awkward fellow ran plump up against him, and knocked him off his horse. I hope you don't feel much shook, sir?" she added, turning to a figure who was leaning back in the carriage, his head wrapped in a pocket-handkerchief, whom Germain had no difficulty in recognising at the same time for the clumsy cavalier whom he had unhorsed, as well as for the individual with whom he had made the unlucky bet.

This was too much for endurance, and wishing the party as much joy as he could spare, he rode in quest of his own friends. Lady Flamborough he found also engaged in the interesting occupation of luncheon, though in somewhat less ravenous a scramble than Wilcox and Co. Lady Jane he could easily perceive looked uneasy and distressed; and she took the first

opportunity of saying to him, in an under-tone :

“ You have lost—*much* I’m afraid.”

“ Dreadfully,” he muttered in reply.

“ Well, never mind,” said she. “ I care not, but—” she added in an earnest manner, “ pray make light of it to mamma, if she mentions the subject. You have no idea of the mischief it may do.”

“ I ought not to deceive her, nor indeed you. I cannot yet recollect the extent of my ruin.”

“ You will not be obliged, I trust, to sell your estates; and for temporary embarrassment, however great, those who have known you best have long been prepared.”

“ Indeed, ’tis very true ! But how should you have known it ?—not from Lady Flam-borough ?”

“ No ; she would not have believed it even

if she had heard it. No matter how I learned it : but it is as well," added she, faintly smiling, " that it should not now have come upon me by surprise, and that you should know it was not in ignorance of this that I allowed you this morning to put your own construction upon my silence."

" You are too good, too considerate, to recollect at such a moment how much I stood in need of such a consolation ;" and he was proceeding with more vehemence than the opportunity permitted, though not than the occasion warranted, to protest the warmth of his attachment, when interrupted by Fitzalbert, who, having sought out the carriage in pursuit of some wine and water, cried out : " Is that Germain ? By the by, Germain, how came you and Latimer to make such a mistake as to back such a beast as that colt of his ? I never saw such

a rip in my life. He has no fore-legs, and his action is dead slow—any one might have seen that.”

At any other moment Germain would have been rather amused at the different opinion given of the same animal before and after the race; but being now completely jaded and dispirited, he had not a repartee left in him, and instantly attended to Lady Flamborough's desire to find the horses and prepare for their return to London.

CHAPTER XIII.

Poor honest lord, brought low by his own heart!
My dearest lord, blest, to be most accursed,
Rich, only to be wretched ;—thy great fortunes
Are made thy chief afflictions. Alas, kind lord !
He's flung in rage from this ungrateful seat
Of monstrous friends ; nor has he with him to
Supply his life, or that which can command it.
I'll follow and inquire him out ;
And ever serve his mind with my best will.

SHAKESPEARE.

LADY JANE had no opportunity in the course of that evening of explaining to her mother the interesting communication that had passed between her and Germain upon the barouche-box, and the next morning at breakfast Lady Flamborough took the subject into her own hands, saying : “ I really think Mr. Starling a very

agreeable man, with a very proper horror of gambling. I have asked him to dinner to-day ; and I hope, Jane, that you will be prepared to treat him more civilly than you are in the habit of doing. I could hardly believe at first all he told me last night about Mr. Germain, but every one I asked since has confirmed it. He is, I should think, irretrievably ruined. He has, it appears, been dreadfully involved all this year, and his last losses will make his former creditors clamorous. I can't help thinking how lucky it is that you always showed a proper unwillingness to encourage his attentions. I own in that you were more clear-sighted than I was myself, and I applaud your prudence."

" Your praise, my dear mamma, you will be sorry to hear, is singularly ill-timed : " and she then proceeded to detail the proposal and

acceptance of the morning before; for which, however, Lady Flamborough was well prepared, though she had thought it expedient to affect ignorance.

“ Singularly indiscreet, indeed, you foolish girl! but of course it was all conditional—to depend upon my approbation—and to be at once at an end if I withheld my consent.”

“ There was no such stipulation. You had never given me to understand that there could be any doubt about that which seemed to you the first object in life.”

“ But I tell you, he is a ruined man—won’t have it in his power to make a settlement for years; and if he was to marry now, he would have a grown-up family while his estate was still at nurse. Your own opinion, I am sure, my dear Jane, must be altered by what you now hear, which of course you could never have expected.”

“Excuse me ; it so happened that in a round-about way, through an old servant, I was perfectly aware that Mr. Germain was an embarrassed man, and therefore was perfectly prepared for what has happened, when I accepted him.”

Lady Flamborough looked at her daughter for a moment, perfectly puzzled, and endeavouring to find out whether she could be in earnest.

“Well, you are the strangest child I ever knew : this must be mere contradiction ; and that you should prefer such a shatterbrained spendthrift to Mr. Starling, who is just as agreeable a companion, and of whom all the world speaks well——”

“You must be aware, my dear mamma, that even if I were disposed to agree with all the world, the time is past when there could be any use in discussing their comparative merits.”

“ I don’t know that ; you can’t mean to consider this engagement any longer binding ? ”

“ But indeed I do. I should as soon consider a change in worldly circumstances as a reason for deserting my duty if actually married, as for forfeiting my word when once pledged.”

“ Well, I see there is no use in arguing with you at present : in a little time you will think better of these things ; but let me remind you, that there is no use either in being rude to Mr. Starling, or in proclaiming an engagement to which I will never consent.”

“ It is not a subject that I am likely to mention, unless questioned by some one that has a right to do so, particularly as I must of course wait patiently for your consent ; but as to not being rude to Mr. Starling, if you mean

by that, leading him to understand that his attentions are welcome, that is what I never did, and am not likely now to begin."

"Upon my word, Jane, your conduct to me is worse than Louisa's ever was; for she never would have thought of making such a connexion as this." But this was a quarter from which also Lady Flamborough was shortly to experience unexpected mortification.

Lady Latimer's fête at the beginning of June was one to which the world of fashion had for several days looked forward with expectations of unrivalled pleasure. Nor were they disappointed—every body was there who ought to have been present, and no one who ought not. The house was one of the best in London, and the lovely Mistress of the Revels never looked more beautiful, or seemed more happy. At last, even the favoured few who had remained

there to talk over those who had not that privilege, had departed ; and Lady Latimer, being left quite alone, remembered, for the first time, that his lordship had not been there all the evening. There had been, it is true, a House of Lords that night ; but this was an hour quite beyond peerage constitutions. Upon inquiry, she found that Lord Latimer had been some time at home, and had retired to his study below. Not a little inclined to reproach him for his neglect, she hurried through the brilliant wilderness, where countless candles shone but upon senseless hangings, and pushing open his study door, found Lord Latimer sitting by the light from a single flat candlestick, crunching a biscuit, sipping wine and water, and surrounded by papers, of which the shape was too long, and the handwriting too round, for any one to suppose them of an agreeable nature.

Lady Latimer, hardly observing how he was occupied, cried out: "Latimer, you stupid man! you have no idea what you have lost. It was much the most perfect thing of the season. Fitzalbert positively insists upon my giving another."

"Then, I presume, Fitzalbert positively means to pay for it."

"What do you mean?—are you dreaming?"

"Sit down, Louisa, I have much that I can no longer avoid telling you. I am a very bad hand though, even at talking business, much more at managing it; but the short of the matter is, that there must be an end of ball-giving, and many other follies besides. The infernal tool who lent me above two hundred thousand pounds, has been sent for by his master before his time, obeyed the summons, died, and has left me to pay his executor instantly

I could as soon pay the national debt. Tomorrow there will be an execution in the house."

Whilst Lady Latimer, breathing thick and painfully with the surprise, listened to this concise but sufficiently explanatory statement, a confused chaos of the favourite images of all she was about to lose, crowded into her mind. The matchless splendour of her universally admired equipage—the studied comforts of her crowded boudoir—the numberless varieties of her unrivalled wardrobe—the recent *éclat* of her much-praised fête—and all the other incidental expenses which had always furnished so many opportunities for the exercise of her acknowledged taste—were for ever gone.

Lord Latimer continued: "If I had even had any ready money to keep them at bay—

but this unlucky Derby has left me without a shilling at present."

When she heard this, her resolution was taken, and removing, one after another, her splendid diamonds from her neck and hair, she said, eagerly, "Would this, and this, and this, be of any use? If so, take them, and use them as you like."

"No, my dear, generous Louisa, upon no account would I think of that," said Lord Latimer, much touched with her liberal proposal; "besides, if for no other reason, it would avail nothing—they would be known at once, and the rumour of our distress would bring a hundred other harpies upon us. No, there is nothing for it, but to retire into the country together for a time."

"To Peatburn, I hope!" said Lady Latimer,—“dear Peatburn; if you would but go

there with me again, I think I could almost reconcile myself to any thing. Say it shall be Peatburn," said she, hanging over him, and kissing his forehead.

"I think it would be rather cold at Peatburn as yet," said he, "but we will see about it. For the present, a friend has lent me his villa at Wimbledon, where I mean to go to-morrow."

Accustomed, as Lord Latimer had long been, to think with indifference of his wife, it was impossible to view, entirely without emotion, that beautiful figure bending anxiously over him, and eagerly pressing upon his acceptance those splendid jewels which, within an hour, she had so highly prized as exciting the admiration of hundreds. Though the long dormant feeling which this sight revived, was not strong enough to make him jump at the idea

of an immediate retreat to Peatburn Lodge, at the very commencement of a cold June, it nevertheless opened to him an unexpected source of consolation in his distresses.

Lord Latimer had been but too accurate in his prognostics of the coming storm. His embarrassments once known, a torrent of unexpected claims broke in upon him. It was a few days after the conversation mentioned above, that Germain returned to town. He had been engaged, almost ever since his last losses, upon a remote property of his, endeavouring to sell some land, and making the best arrangement he could of his affairs, and the most prompt settlement of the more pressing demands; for, though he never doubted the sincerity of Oakley's offer to accommodate him with any money he might want, yet he was very unwilling to lay himself under an obli-

gation which he could not help fearing would not tend to the permanence of their friendship.

Upon arriving in London, as it was not till the evening that he could meet his man of business at his chambers, Germain strolled, as a matter of course, to Lord Latimer's house, not having heard what had happened. Raising his eyes instinctively to the windows, he was much amazed to see them stuck all over with bills, and the truth at once rushed upon his mind. The door was open: he entered without asking any question, and was met by a demand of a shilling for a catalogue. The sad reverse conveyed by this little incident struck him forcibly. The entrance within those walls had always been one of the few things which money could not purchase. Fashion, caprice, or prejudice, might all occasionally have exercised an

undue influence in the choice of its inmates ; but in vain would the man of mere wealth have attempted to edge in more than his card—and now a shilling's worth of catalogue laid it open to every one.

The doors were all placed ajar, and he made his way, without impediment, straight to Lady Latimer's boudoir. “ And here,” thought he, “ where hardly any were allowed to penetrate, and the favoured few who were, yielded so entirely to her powers of fascination, that criticism would have been impossible, and admiration unavoidable—here now must all her little whims and fancies be exposed to the stupid stare, or contemptuous wonderment of the vulgar !”

The course of his meditations was interrupted by the free entrance, among others, of Captain and Mrs. Wilcox, who were both very busy

with catalogues, and pencils, marking intended purchases. The captain addressed him.

“Pretty pickings here, sir, for those that have the ready. I am sorry though, that my lord should have smashed.”

“I thought at first,” said Mrs. Wilcox, “that they had huddled all the furniture of the house into this room, but I find that it was always so crowded.”

“Her ladyship ought to have been the wife of an upholsterer,” continued the captain.

“Poor lady! she certainly must have been very silly,” exclaimed Mrs. Wilcox.

“And is it come to this,” thought Germain, “that Lady Latimer should be the object of the contemptuous pity of Mrs. Captain Wilcox!”

“Oh, look here, Wilcox!” said the lady,

“ I must have this ‘ *chaise long*,’ as the French call it.”

“ Why, my dear, once down you’d never be able to get up again :” an apprehension which seemed not improbable, judging by the figure of his wife, at present not improved by temporary circumstances of a family nature.

“ However,” said Mrs. Wilcox, “ I’ll soon show you.”

But Germain could not bear to remain to witness the experiment. It seemed little less than sacrilege to him, that Lady Latimer’s own chair in her favourite corner, where her delicate form had so lately reposed, should be condemned to groan beneath the weight of Mrs. Wilcox.

Not a little distressed at the sad reverse he had just unexpectedly witnessed, and to the misery of which his own difficulties made him

peculiarly sensible, he hastened to quit the house, and hurried towards that part of the town where he was to find his lawyer.

CHAPTER XIV.

Oft have I heard of you, my Lord Biron,
Before I saw you ; and the world's large tongue
Proclaims you for a man replete with mocks,
Full of comparisons and winding flouts,
Which you on all estates will execute,
That lie within the mercy of your wit.

SHAKSPEARE.

It was on the same day that Germain had been thus employed on his return to town, that Oakley was dining alone in the coffee-room of —— Club. The time of probation fixed by Helen had almost expired, and he ventured to look forward to the immediate reward of his patience.

There was another table laid for three in another part of the room, but those who were expected to occupy it had not arrived when he began his solitary meal. His back was turned towards their table, and their entrance taking place during a pause in his own dinner, when he was agreeably anticipating his future prospects, and apparently occupied with the evening paper, he did not turn round to remark who came in.

They talked in rather an under-tone, but with that quick ear which one has for his own name, he thought he heard his repeated in a whisper, and presently after, in the same voice, that of Miss Mordaunt. He turned hastily round, and opposite to him, sitting between two other gentlemen, he beheld Fitzalbert, and, as he fancied, with the same intolerably insolent expression of countenance which had dis-

gusted him at Germain's. He longed immediately and openly to notice it, but the mere mention of a name presented no tangible ground of offence.

Sir Gregory Greenford was one of Fitzalbert's companions; the other was an officer on the eve of departure to join his regiment in Portugal. They now conversed together in a louder tone, and the subject was Germain and his losses. Fitzalbert spoke slightly of him, and mentioned rather boastfully the sums he had himself won of him in the course of the year.

Oakley could bear this no longer, and turning round, said: "I believe, Mr. Fitzalbert, you consider yourself as much Germain's friend as I am; but my idea of that character would be rather to relieve his distress than to ruin him first, and ridicule him afterwards."

This was in itself not an over-conciliatory address, and Oakley had condensed into his delivery of it all his long-suppressed dislike of Fitzalbert, who, on his side, answered very coolly :

“ The very natural distinction between having more money than you know how to spend, and spending more money than you know how to get.”

He then continued talking on the same subject to his two companions, saying : “ As to Germain, no Mentor could have saved him six months : I never saw any one so devotedly determined to lose.”

“ Better to lose like Germain, than win like some others !” audibly ejaculated Oakley ; but at the same moment the waiter was asking Fitzalbert’s orders as to what claret he would choose. He therefore did not catch the

words, and here the matter might have rested, but for Sir Gregory Greenford, who furnished another proof that a fool is the surest mischief-maker, by saying to the military gentleman : “ That’s meant as a cut at Fitz, I think.”

The military gentleman looked grim, and shook his head. Fitzalbert’s attention was thus called to what had passed, and he turned towards Oakley : “ If you did me the honour to address any thing further to me, Mr. Oakley,” said he, “ I have to regret that the more interesting occupation of choosing my claret prevented my hearing it. I am now perfectly at leisure.”

“ I don’t feel myself bound to repeat what you found it convenient not to hear.”

“ If you mean that I myself should have regarded it as not of the slightest consequence, you are quite right ; but as those gentlemen seem to attach some importance to it, I must request

Sir Gregory to tell me what it was you said, and then I shall know whether it is worth my while to require you either to repeat or retract it."

Sir Gregory gave it word for word, and so repeated, it certainly seemed to convey an insinuation which might have been missed when originally spoken. Fitzalbert's cheek reddened with indignation at the idea of being suspected of foul play, of which he was quite incapable, though sufficiently ready to avail himself of what are called "fair advantages."

"Mr. Oakley," said he, "your words certainly mean to impute something to somebody, as even you, I suppose, are not Utopian enough to conceive the mere act of winning to any amount, worse than losing, independent of some disgrace attached to the manner of doing so. As this sentiment followed immediately

after a lecture on friendship with which you were kind enough to favour me, I feel myself bound to ask, what under other circumstances I certainly should not have conceived possible, whether you meant any allusion to me?"

"I stated my opinion generally; you may apply it particularly where you know it to be best deserved."

"Excuse me, sir; it is not a riddle you have given me to guess, but an accusation you have hazarded: and either to support or retract it, since you have presumed to call my character in question, you must be now prepared."

"I am not prepared to think such a subject worth any further trouble," replied Oakley.

There was much in all this, and in what followed, like what occurs in most quarrels of a similar description, which both parties would have been at once ashamed and surprised at, had it been shown to them in writing on the following

morning, and which is therefore very little worth commemorating. It is sufficient to state, that it led to the application of words which are rarely uttered, and still more rarely retracted. The inevitable result must have been guessed. A meeting was arranged for the next morning, and in this instance the time and place were rather unusually fixed by the two principals, who felt too much mutual animosity to allow the intervention of any other parties to delay the settlement of so important a point.

Fitzalbert immediately dispatched a note to Lord Latimer, desiring to see him on particular business, without mentioning what it was. The military friend, who had dined with him, was to set out that very night to join his regiment in Portugal; and Fitzalbert was not at all desirous to trust the arrangement of so serious an affair to Sir Gregory Greenford.

Oakley, on his part, his habits being little gregarious, was rather at a loss for a second, even had he been aware of Germain's return to London; and his having been innocently enough the cause of the immediate quarrel would have put him out of the question. He accidentally met a casual House of Commons acquaintance in the streets, and not having any one with whom he was more intimate, to whom he could apply, he asked and obtained of him a promise to accompany him in the morning to Wimbledon.

When Lord Latimer received Fitzalbert's note, he hastened up to town immediately, and repaired straight to the Club, where he found his friend still awaiting him. Upon its being mentioned to him with whom the quarrel was, he at first positively declined having any thing to do with it, and that, he said, for rea-

sons of a private nature which had been mentioned to him in confidence that day, but which had no reference whatever to Fitzalbert.

“ But,” said Fitzalbert, “ hear at least the whole case, and then say, whether you think I am in a situation in which you are prepared to desert me.”

When the quarrel was detailed to Lord Latimer from the beginning, the unprovoked nature of the attack inferred from Oakley’s words by Fitzalbert, and the odious imputation upon his honour which had been first insinuated and afterwards maintained, was fairly submitted to his consideration, he shook his head, and said, “ Certainly no concession can originate with you.” After thinking a little, he continued : “ And you are really anxious that I should be your second in this affair ?”

“ I consider it as of the highest possible

importance. I told Greenford, who was present at the time, that I had written to you for that purpose, and should you decline, the most disadvantageous constructions will be put upon my conduct."

"Well," said Lord Latimer, "allow me but another hour to act as a free agent on my own account, and then, if you still require me, of course I will not disappoint you."

It was with a heavy heart, and very faint hopes of success, that Lord Latimer went direct from the Club to Oakley's house.

Since the Latimers had retired to their friend's villa at Wimbledon, they had of course been much alone, and habits of confidence had revived between them. Within the last two days, they had been joined by Helen. Lady Latimer felt it impossible to conceal from her husband the delight she felt at the happy pros-

pects of her friend ; and she obtained permission to communicate them at once to him, particularly as this seemed to be a very good opportunity for at once putting an end to the foolish coolness between him and Oakley, which had continued ever since the election.

Lord Latimer was delighted with what he heard ; for even amidst so many other pursuits he had not been before insensible to Helen's merits, and the good sense and good feeling which she showed in her conversations with Lady Latimer on the subject of their present distresses had confirmed his former very favourable impression. He therefore had, that very evening, readily undertaken, at Lady Latimer's request, to ride up on the morrow, the day of the expiration of Helen's mourning, to London, to extend a friendly hand to Oakley, and bring him down with him to see

his betrothed bride, a distinction which, they none of them doubted, would at once make Oakley forget any soreness he might once have felt towards a now-welcome ambassador.

As Lord Latimer slowly walked towards Oakley's, in vain endeavouring to make up his mind as to how he was to execute the difficult task with which he had charged himself, the sad contrast between his present business, and the happy mission on which he expected to have been sent, oppressed him heavily, and of the still more melancholy catastrophe to which it might lead he could not bear to think.

CHAPTER XV.

I thank you, gracious lord,
For all your fair endeavours ; and entreat
Out of a new-sad soul, that you vouchsafe
In your rich wisdom, to excuse, or hide
The liberal opposition of my spirits,
If over-boldly I have borne myself
In the converse of breath.

SHAKESPEARE.

LORD LATIMER had much difficulty in obtaining admittance to Oakley. The servants said that their master had returned home, but had retired to his library, and given directions that he should not be disturbed. However, upon Lord Latimer's insisting that they should take in his name, this was at length done ;

and very shortly afterwards he was ushered into the library—a long, low, gloomy-looking apartment, at one end of which Oakley was seated, busily engaged in writing. He rose to receive Lord Latimer, and, motioning him to a chair, said: “I presume, my lord, that you come on the part of Mr. Fitzalbert—if so, and there is any thing else to arrange, you will oblige me by communicating with my friend, Mr. Sandford.”

“You mistake: it is on my own part I come, and it is with yourself that I wish to communicate.”

“I own you surprise me: perhaps then some other time will answer your purpose: at present I am engaged on very particular business.”

“It is on that very business that I wish to speak to you.”

“ That can hardly be—uninvited by me, unauthorized by the other party——”

“ My character,” said Lord Latimer, avoiding a direct answer, “ does not often lead me to undertake the management of other people’s concerns; on the contrary, I oftener neglect even my own: but, at the risk of being reckoned officious, I cannot allow this affair to proceed further without doing my utmost to prevent it. It is a very foolish business, Mr. Oakley.”

“ Allow me to ask you, my lord, from whom you have derived the account of this foolish business?”

“ From Mr. Fitzalbert.”

“ Then you can hardly expect me to agree with you in an opinion of it which you derive from such a source.”

“ You have not lived much in the world,

Mr. Oakley; I have; and nobody who knows me will suspect that if I thought your honour at all concerned in the prosecution of this affair, I would put any impediment in the way of it; rather would I do all in my power to bring it as speedily as possible to its inevitable conclusion: but I cannot think it necessary that you should bind yourself down to maintain a few hasty words spoken in a moment of irritation, and probably without very accurately weighing their import."

"But this is not exactly the case. Circumstances led me irresistibly to give my real opinion of Mr. Fitzalbert. It is not often in the intercourse of society that one is called to do so of any man; but having chosen to avail myself of an opportunity in this instance, I certainly shall not retract it. And having said thus much, I think, my lord, it cannot be

unexpected by you, if I ask what has so suddenly given your lordship an interest in my concerns?"

"I thought you might have guessed the source of that interest, which undoubtedly must otherwise appear extraordinary. Lady Latimer has a friend, Mr. Oakley, at present staying with us, on whose account I hoped to-morrow to have seen you on a different footing, having been deputed to announce to you the termination of her mourning. If you ask what it is that brings me here now, it is anxiety for her happiness, which I would not see wantonly hazarded."

"That is a part of the subject on which I have endeavoured to avoid thinking," said Oakley, after a deep sigh.

"And why so? Were the quarrel unavoidable, I should be the last person to bring

forward this or any other topic which might unman you; but I cannot endure that rather than own yourself in the wrong, when you most undoubtedly are so, you should run the risk of rendering her miserable for life, who has already had sorrows enough."

Lord Latimer stopped—and there was a long pause of anxious expectation on his part, and an evident agitation on that of Oakley, who, at length, in a softened tone inquired: "What then is the course which you recommend?"

"It is a state of things which appears to me to offer no alternative: the same line of conduct which, if I was already acting for Fitzalbert, as I perhaps shall be, I should then deem satisfactory to him, is the only one which, in sincere goodwill, I should recommend to you to adopt—to disclaim most distinctly any allusion to him in the discreditable insinuations

you let fall, and to apologize for those hasty expressions which afterwards gave a colour to such an application of your words."

"That is quite out of the question!" Oakley warmly exclaimed; "humble myself before him?—Never!"

"It is certainly not pleasant to own one's self in the wrong, but it is better than to continue so—knowing and not acknowledging it. The fault originated with you."

"But I do not consider myself to have been in the wrong. What I said of Fitzalbert is what I really think."

"On what grounds do you rest that opinion? Have you any proofs?"

"Proofs?—not perhaps any positive facts—but besides the enormous sums lost by Germain within a year, of which Fitzalbert has won by much the largest portion——"

“That will not do,” interrupted Lord Latimer, provoked at Oakley’s attempting to draw an inference which he thought so monstrous: “you yourself must perceive at once there is no argument in that.”

“Well, perhaps not. I do not mean to insist upon it; but to come to the point at once—whether I was thoroughly justified in saying what I did without some proof which I could bring forward, it is now useless to discuss. Confirmed and credited or not, my opinion still remains the same; and to say that I did not mean Mr. Fitzalbert in what I said, is a falsehood to which I never will stoop, and therefore——”

“One moment—will it alter your opinion, and consequently your conduct, if I state to you, that having known Fitzalbert all my life as fond of play and generally successful, I give

you my honour I believe him to be incapable of any thing ungentlemanlike?"

"That is a point which I had rather not discuss with you. It is a test by which you must excuse me if I decline to try my opinion. It is sufficient that if I were to attempt to say I did not mean any attack upon Fitzalbert, my look would belie my words, and I should degrade myself without being believed. 'This being the case, I have only to return you my most sincere thanks for your kind intentions, reminding you at the same time that there can be no use in pressing the matter further.'"

At this hint Lord Latimer slowly and unwillingly rose to depart, saying: "I am very sorry, Mr. Oakley, that we part thus: when next we meet I shall probably be employed by Fitzalbert. I would enter into no engagement till

I had endeavoured to accommodate matters on my own responsibility. Having failed in this, and feeling that Fitzalbert has been subjected by you to odious imputations upon his character, which I utterly disbelieve, I cannot, without gross injustice, refuse to accompany him. When there, it will be my endeavour to keep the door open for accommodation to the last moment, hoping that you may see reason to alter your unfortunate determination ; and then I shall accept that as satisfactory to Fitzalbert, which I beg leave earnestly to repeat to you as the best advice I can give as a gentleman and a man of the world." Oakley shook his head, but parted with Lord Latimer with more cordiality than an hour before he would have thought it possible he could have felt towards him.

When Lord Latimer returned to the Club,

he communicated to Fitzalbert his vain attempt to bring Oakley to reason, without, however, dwelling fully upon the obstinacy he had shown. "Oh!" said Fitzalbert, "I don't desire the man's life; only let him make me an explicit apology before Sir Gregory Greenford, who was present, and write by the first Lisbon mail to my friend, the major, who is off for Portugal, to say that he has done so, and I am satisfied; but he must unsay every word of it, or by the powers that made him, I shall certainly shoot him!"

Lord Latimer shuddered as he recollected the consummate skill of the person who said this.

When Oakley was left to himself, it was in vain that he endeavoured to banish from his mind those considerations which had been pressed upon his attention by Lord Latimer. His attempts to do so were considerably im-

peded by his finding it impossible even to satisfy himself with his own conduct in the affair. He had been so long accustomed to view Fitzalbert personally with dislike, and to think of his character with distrust, that in his own opinion he had set him down as little better than a sharper. But in vain he now attempted to fix upon any ostensible grounds for such an imputation—and was he to risk his own life, and attempt that of his adversary, in the obstinate support of a mere suspicion? This was a state of things to which he could not look forward with satisfaction, and yet the alternative was one which he could never adopt—to be forced to assert that he meant no allusion to Fitzalbert in those insinuations which he felt that those who had heard him must still remain convinced could bear no other construction, and which, had they been in themselves doubtful,

had been rendered more obvious by the angry altercation which followed. And was he then to submit to be branded in the eyes of the world as one who had maliciously hazarded groundless accusations, and afterwards wanted courage to support them ?

This last consideration was conclusive ; and though he could not contemplate the situation in which he had placed himself without some self-reproach, as well as uneasiness, he no longer had any doubts as to the inevitable course he must pursue.

Neither of the principals passed so restless a night as Lord Latimer. He could not at all combat his melancholy forebodings as to how different a day the morrow might prove to those he had left behind at Wimbledon, from that which they fondly anticipated. His mind always required some object of interest to occupy

it, and during his present pecuniary difficulties, and his consequent retirement from those gay scenes whose excitement had always been at his command, his attention had been much engrossed by the unexpected prospects of Helen, for whom he felt a sincere regard.

When he received Fitzalbert's note, guessing the sort of business on which he was summoned, he had made his own affairs, at that time naturally requiring much of his attention, an excuse for going to town, stating that he should not return till the morning.

"And then, mind," said Lady Latimer, "I shall not forgive you unless you bring Mr. Oakley back with you." Helen said nothing; but the expression of her countenance as Lady Latimer said this, still recurred to him every time he attempted to compose himself to sleep.

Wimbledon Common had been mentioned between Oakley and Fitzalbert, as the appointed place of meeting. Heavily the morning dawned which was to light them on their cheerless way. The air was cold and chill, and a fog, unusually thick for the time of year, gathered round their carriages, and almost impeded their progress. Little communication passed between Oakley and Mr. Sanford. The latter was always rather afraid of Oakley ; and embarrassed at the task he had undertaken, which he had only accepted from not knowing how to refuse, and which Oakley would never have asked of him but from accidentally meeting him, and not knowing how, at such short notice, to procure another second.

Fitzalbert was much more amusing than Lord Latimer, yet the flow of his fun was not so natural as usual ; for, even to the coolest, it

is no exhilarating destination. "The last time I was up at this unconscionable hour it was just such another foggy morning. I was at your place then, by the bye—Peatburn. It rather interfered with my *shooting* then too."

Lord Latimer not making any attempt to muster even a smile at this misplaced pleasantry, Fitzalbert relapsed into silence, and occupied himself in watching the progress of the fog, which slowly rolled away as they approached the higher ground to which they were bound. Arrived there, both parties left their carriages, and proceeded on foot to a more retired part of the heath. As Fitzalbert strode on before, Lord Latimer stopped a little for Oakley, who was following with Mr. Sandford, and once more addressed him. "I wish you would allow me to think, Mr. Oakley, that you have better considered what I sug-

gested last night. It is not by any means too late."

"Any thing that you may have now to communicate to me, my lord, had better be addressed through my friend, Mr. Sandford; but if he makes any appeal to me, I should certainly say that I did not come here to be bullied, and that any interruption, or hesitation, at this moment, unless on some fresh ground, must certainly have that appearance."

Lord Latimer looked at Mr. Sandford, but he could see no attempt, on his part, at any opening for further negociation, and as they had now reached the ground, he could only hope that, after the first fire, the renewed attempts he then determined to make at explanation, might be more successful, as the idea of misconception, as to his motives, which

seemed to influence Oakley's conduct, would then no longer have the same weight.

Fitzalbert had been led to expect, from what Lord Latimer told him the evening before, that Oakley, in his cooler moments, would see the unjustifiable nature of the imputations he had ventured, and he was therefore more exasperated at the obstinacy with which he appeared now to defend them.

It was arranged by Lord Latimer, with the concurrence of his coadjutor, that to avoid premeditation, the parties should not face each other till a given signal—that they should then immediately level their pistols and fire.

At the given signal, Oakley turned round, and stretched forth his arm steadily, but with what accuracy of aim was never known. Fitzalbert, upon facing his adversary, raised his hand with apparent carelessness, but, as it

proved, with too fatal precision, for almost within the same second of time in which the instrument of death reached the level of his unerring eye, Oakley staggered and fell.

All the parties, among whom was a surgeon, who had been brought down on purpose, hastened to his assistance. As soon as Oakley could speak, the first person he addressed was Fitz-albert.

“ You had better go—I feel you had—but first, before these gentlemen—you could do no otherwise than you did. The blame was entirely my own—most heartily do I forgive you.”

It was some time before the medical gentleman thought it safe to move Oakley at all, as the ball appeared to be in the immediate neighbourhood of the lungs; but when a litter was procured, as it was highly important that

he should be carried as short a distance as possible, they attempted to remove him to Lord Latimer's villa at Wimbledon.

CHAPTER XV.

Speak, is't so ?

If it be so, you have wound a goodly clue ;
If it be not, forswear't ; howe'er, I charge thee,
As heaven shall work in me for mine avail,
To tell me truly.

SHAKSPEARE.

LADY LATIMER and Helen had that morning, after breakfast, been talking over the future prospects of the latter.

“ I only hope, my dear Helen,” said Lady Latimer, “ that you may be as happy as you deserve to be. The doubts I have expressed as to some parts of Mr. Oakley’s character, have only been stated that you might early correct

their evil tendency, not from any desire to take from the value of your very promising prospects; and now, having said thus much, for my letter-writing; for before post-time, I trust, one may announce it as certain."

Soon after Lady Latimer had retired at one door, Lord Latimer came in at the other. Helen's back was turned towards him, and he advanced hastily to her, evidently mistaking her for Lady Latimer; for, upon perceiving who it was, he shrunk back with an expression which did not escape her observation, and immediately conveyed a foreboding of some evil tidings to her.

"Where is he?—will he not come?" she abruptly enquired; though it was the first time that the subject of Oakley had escaped her lips to the ears of Lord Latimer.

In the course of a complicated intercourse

with the world, Lord Latimer had, of course, often been placed in situations of embarrassment and difficulty, but he had never felt so unequal to any thing, as to the painful task of having to break to the interesting orphan-girl before him the sudden overthrow—the utter extinction—of all her fond hopes and brilliant expectations. He could only stammer out: “He is, I believe, in the house.”

“Where? Why not here?” she anxiously asked.

“He is hurt—rather—I fear; but, I trust, not very much.”

A servant came in, whose manner was evidently confused and disturbed, and before Lord Latimer could motion him to silence, he said: “The doctor, my lord, must see you again immediately.”

Lord Latimer could not but feel partially

relieved by this momentary escape from his difficult duty. He said : “ I will return immediately, Miss Mordaunt, and you shall know all—but compose yourself—I trust there is still hope,”—and he hastily left the room.

“ Hope !” cried Helen, bewildered. “ Good God ! what has happened ?”

The idea that first suggested itself was of a fall from his horse, or some other accident in coming down ; forth at there should have been a quarrel—a duel—and yet that he should be there, was an idea that with no apparent probability could have presented itself. A few moments she waited Lord Latimer’s return in a state of trembling anxiety, when, no longer able to bear the agonizing suspense, she staggered to the stairs. At the head of the first flight there was a half-open door, through which, she fancied she heard Lord Latimer’s voice in low and earnest

conversation. She succeeded in reaching that door. It opened into a dressing-room, but there was no longer any one in it. Opposite to that, through which she had entered, there was another door closed—they must have disappeared through that—and Oakley must be there. Endeavouring to compose her scattered spirits, she retired to the open window, gasping for breath, and overcome with apprehension. Whilst she remained here, half hid by the falling curtains, Lord Latimer and the surgeon came through from the inner room without seeing her.

“No hope, my lord, no hope!” said the medical man: “he may linger a few hours longer; but he is mortally wounded.”

“Poor Helen!” said Lord Latimer, and they passed on.

She made an attempt to stop them, and en-

quire further, but the words died away on her lips. She then determined to enter Oakley's apartment, and with her own eyes learn the worst; a moment of irresolution and maiden modesty succeeded. "This is no time for such considerations," thought she. Endeavouring to gather strength for this great effort, she leant, in passing, against the back of an arm-chair, when, with freezing horror, she perceived that one side of it was wet with blood. Revolting from thence, her eye wandered unconsciously to the table, where the pistols had been carelessly thrown, and the whole dreadful catastrophe rushed at once upon her mind.

When, by the exertion of the most extraordinary self-command, she had so far recovered as to attempt entering Oakley's room, she beheld him stretched on the bed, his eyes half closed, his countenance, which was naturally pale, but little

altered. She glided in so softly, that he was not at first conscious of her entrance. She dropped gently on her knees by the side of his bed, and taking his hand in hers, bathed it with her tears.

“Helen, sweet Helen!” murmured Oakley, and words of comfort were rising to his lips; but when he looked at the orphan-girl, and recollected that he was all in all to her, the half-formed phrase of consolation choked him, as he felt that such attempt would be a mockery to the desolation of her heart, and he could only feebly and indistinctly repeat: “Poor—poor Helen!”

He never spoke more: and when Lord Latimer, a few minutes afterwards, entered the apartment, having, in vain, sought Helen elsewhere, he found her senseless on the dead body of her lover; and when returning conscious-

ness brought a knowledge of the events that had blasted her happiness for ever, the distraction that followed, rendered her recovery from that death-like swoon, a thing which it was doubtful whether her friends durst rejoice at.

CHAPTER XVI.

CONCLUSION.

Our revels now are ended; these our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
Are melted into air, into thin air.

SHAKSPEARE.

By Oakley's will, which bore the date of the evening before the duel, and in framing which, he had been engaged when visited by Lord Latimer, his immense property was divided between Helen and Germain. To Miss Mor-daunt, was left Rockington Castle, (where his interview with her father had taken place,) and all his other detached property of every des-

cription. To Germain he bequeathed, with many kind expressions of regard, the fine estate of Goldsborough Park and its appendages.

After a time, Helen retired to Rockington Castle, where she soon found ample employment of a tranquil nature, best suited to the state of her feelings, in restoring the deserted dwellings, which now disfigured that property, to their former cheerful condition ; and it was not long before she felt to a certain degree consoled, in the active exercise of that Christian charity and universal benevolence, which brought with it its own reward, in the striking contrast it furnished to the withering influence of her father's misanthropy.

Fitzalbert had hurried abroad the very morning of the duel, and returned, after a time, much changed in character and sobered in spirits, by the sad remembrance which, in spite of every

effort to suppress it, would rise again every day, almost every hour,—that he had deprived a fellow-creature of life.

Lady Flamborough remarked, even during the very first days when people were still talking of the duel, that, in spite of all his foibles, Germain had always been her favourite. Need it be added, that she had been the first to learn the settlement of the Goldsborough Park estate?

Fortune seemed at this time to favour all her ladyship's schemes; for Sir Gregory at length made up his mighty mind to propose to Lady Caroline. It need hardly be added that he obtained the lady, though he did not at the same time obtain her fortune of ten thousand pounds, which he was obliged to transfer to his new brother-in-law, Lord Latimer. For though his lordship had been obliged to sell off all his stud, yet, in other hands, the yearling

colt, against which Sir Gregory had so rashly not only hazarded an opinion, but betted ten thousand pounds, won the produce stakes in a canter—and this windfall was very welcome to Lord Latimer, who was at the time economising abroad.

Mr. and Lady Jane Germain retired to Goldsborough Park for the honeymoon, and afterwards passed much of their time at that delightful place. If there was any drawback to Germain's enjoyment of it, it certainly arose from the unfortunate propinquity of Wilcox House. He was but too often in the habit of seeing in the person of the idol of his boyish fancy, the mistress of that mansion, a perpetual memento of the fallibility of human taste. However, he managed so far to outlive his feelings on this subject, as to go very satisfactorily through the duties of neigh-

bourhood; and at the annual dinner there, to which he and Lady Jane were always invited, he regularly availed himself, as a signal for their departure, of the moment when Mrs. Wilcox (no longer able, even in honour of her guests, to resist her daily afternoon doze) was stretched at full length on the identical *fau-teuil* which she had purchased at Lady Latimer's sale.

The political changes which have lately occurred, have made Lady Boreton acquiesce very readily in Germain's continuing a member for the county, as there no longer exists any substantial difference between them.

In domestic affairs, if Germain has not yet learned to think for himself, he at least allows Lady Jane the exclusive privilege of thinking for him—a custom in which he is countenanced by many more worthy men than would choose

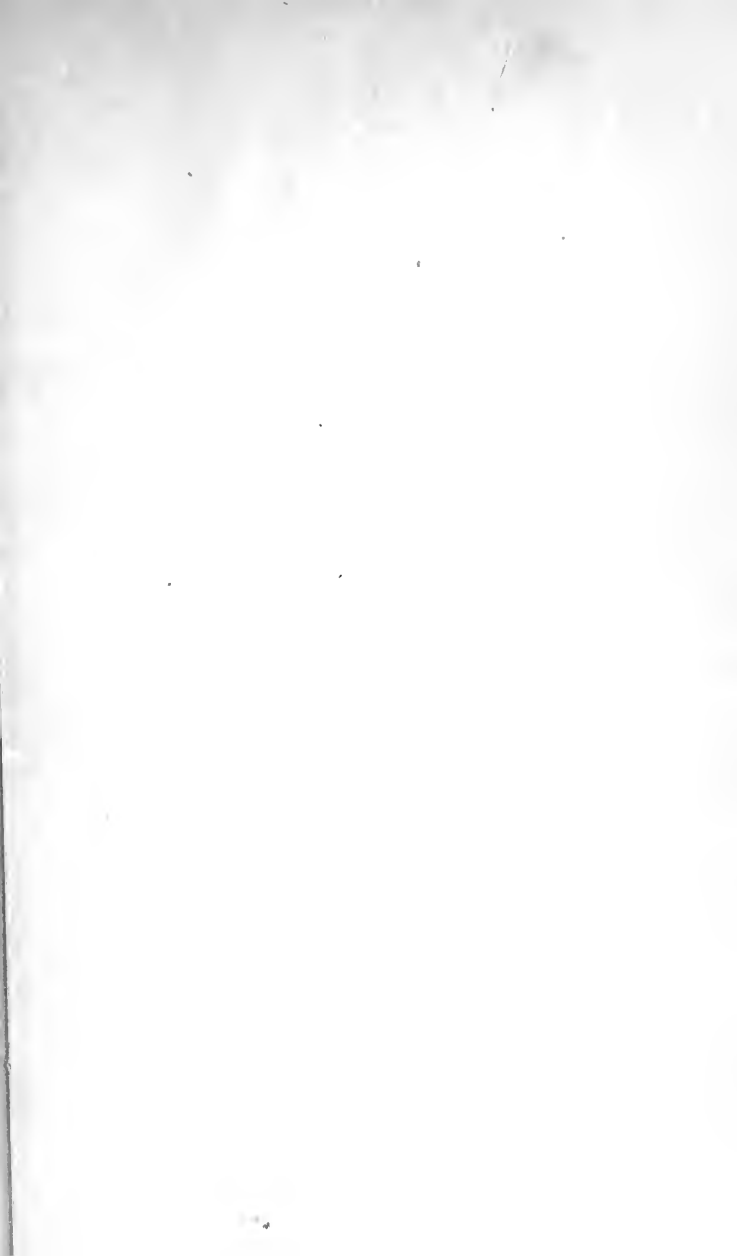
to acknowledge it : and by whatever private arrangement such a happy result is produced, it is undoubtedly to be desired, that those who are to pass their lives together, should somehow concur in the suitable and timely alternate application of those two most important monosyllables—

YES AND NO.

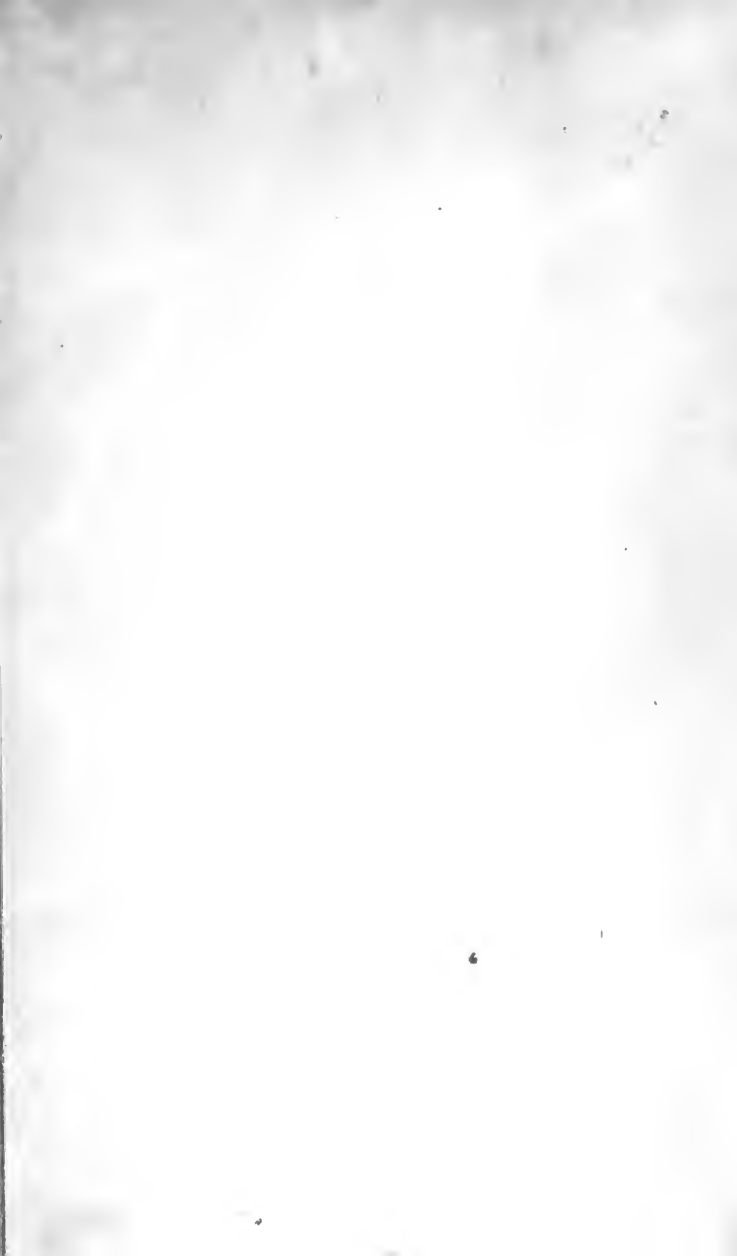
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